Experiences of learning.

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'EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING'

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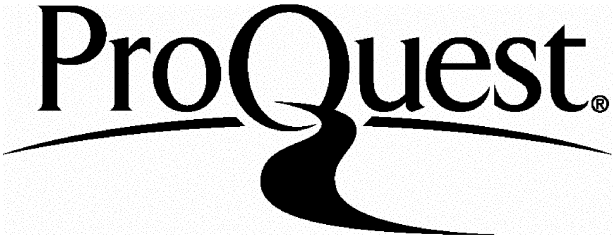

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'EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING'

ABSTRACT

Do we learn, develop and change in the course of our everyday lives? - and how? Founded on a belief that we have the ability to direct our lives and to learn from our experiences, 'Experiences of Learning' tells of a personal attempt to explore the nature of the process of personal development as we perceive it, individually and in general, in our adult lives.

Adopting a view that our experiences are characterised by paradox, I have sought to explore the questions: 'How do we develop and yet never find our development completed? How do we change and yet experience constancy in our lives and identities?' - only to find in conclusion that the dialectic is less a case of constancy emerging through change, than of change emerging through constancy.

'Experiences of Learning' also explores the theme of learning through inquiry, through the development of a methodology incorporating participative and group learning methods of experiential learning and discovery, in a general context of phenomenological investigation and qualitative analysis. Questions addressed in the methodology include: 'How can we develop a theory together that is truly grounded in the experiences of those whom it purports to describe? What is the involvement of the researcher(s)? How can research engage its participants in an inquiry that is genuinely meaningful to them, in an experience of learning?'

The thesis traces the course of inquiry through the design and evaluation of two major empirical projects, each involving group workshops and individual interviews, and the development of a detailed profile of each participant, and culminates in the development of a theory of learning and change in adult life. It also traces the development of the third theme of learning appearing through inquiry, the personal learning experienced by the researcher who undertakes such a venture.

INTRODUCTION

This is a thesis which tells two stories, has two faces. The first and most obvious face is that of a personal inquiry into learning, development and change - what we mean by it, individually and together, how we can explore and understand it, how we can describe and interpret it in the practical context of our lives and experiences.

This is the expected story, presenting a teleological face, developing from my conscious aims and interests. It is presented in a form which describes the temporal and logical sequence of events, beginning with the exploration and definition of my initial ideas, and their location in prevailing traditions of thought, and proceeding through the design and implementation of a practical methodology to explore them, to the final presentation of emerging ideas and conclusions.

This face contains several subsidiary stories:

i. The story of the conceptual development, and the progressive definition of a conceptual model of learning, change and development.

ii. The story of the method, the development and improvement of a practical methodology to meet this

iii. The stories of the participants, the chapters of real life providing the ground for the conceptual and methodological development.

All three stories are integrated in the whole story of the inquiry, which is told in logical sequence, how each stage emerged from that preceding, in the pursuit of my personal conceptual and practical aims.

It should be remembered though that this is the story as it makes sense to me now, as a comprehendable whole, in reflection. Actually 'doing' the research involved a much more complex process of 'making sense' than the surface logic may tell. It involved a constant process of clarification, definition and redefinition and transformation of

ideas throughout the inquiry, in the feedback between stages, between past, present and future. The surface face has been progressively reshaped as events through time brought new meanings to bear and revealed underlying assumptions and preconceptions along the way.

It is through this underlying process of making sense that the second face and story of inquiry has emerged. For I found that the assumptions made explicit along the way were not merely concepts and implicit theories, but were also personal assumptions, rooted in my own life and experience. The story of conceptual development has a complementary underface - the story of my own developing self-awareness and growing personal involvement through the inquiry.

The thesis as a whole is both a story of intentional and unintentional explorations. Perhaps the most resounding discovery for me was how this second unintentional face emerged nonetheless through the events, experiences, decisions and questions encountered in the pursuit of the inquiry.

CHAPTER 1

STARTING OUT : ESTABLISHING MY PRACTICAL AND CONCEPTUAL AIMS OF INQUIRY

1. Developing a focus: the beginnings in personal experience

I came to research at the age of twenty seven, after spending some years working in the public services, and latterly as a training officer running in-service courses for social work staff. I developed then an initial idea of the area labelled "Personal Development" as a phenomenon which appeared under any number of guises in training, and in varying degrees of obvious association with the skills of social work and supervisory management. It was something that staff might encourage their clients to engage in, in family therapy for example; it was something that staff might find for themselves in training exercises such as role-plays designed to facilitate better management of work relationships; it was something that they and I too might find in any kind of group training exercise which involved the development of self-awareness and self-management, in work and in personal life. For some indeed it appeared to be a way of life, a philosophy and religion which encompassed everything.

I found during the course of my work that I wanted to understand more clearly the validity of the relationship between the development of skills for work and the whole philosophy and psychology of self-management. I was suspicious of the way in which training under the "Personal Development/Human Relations Training" banner was automatically assumed to be 'the' training method and superior way of learning, and I wanted to understand the ideological bases of therapeutic and training practices. At the same time though, in my own experience of people at work, and especially people working in positions of managerial responsibility, it seemed that there was a fairly widespread need for people

to learn how to become more at ease with themselves and with their colleagues; to be more sensitive and apt in their communications and working relationships; to be less rigid in their own beliefs, attitudes and behaviours; to be more open to criticism, to the views of others and to change of any kind, in what they were doing or thinking - all characteristics which I associated with the ideology of "Personal Development" training.

I concluded that there was an obvious need for some kind of personal development in all of us, myself not excepted, to help us to work together and for organisations as a whole to function more effectively.

There were a number of ways in which I might approach the subject in research - by evaluating actual training courses; by identifying needs for personal development training; by looking at individual capacities for learning and development, for example. It was the latter that caught my imagination. Why was it that some people seemed unable to adapt to changing environments, to look at themselves as others saw them, and to avoid anything to do with training and groups - while others thrived on all of these things? Was it 'better' to live in isolation, closed to the world, and how? Are we all 'closed' in some way, and open in others, receptive to new ideas and ways of living and being?

I was especially interested in exploring our different capacities for change, in the light of my own experiences of change, both in circumstances and in myself in recent years, having decided to separate from my husband and to give up a secure and enjoyable job to become a full-time student again. I knew that I had chosen to make these changes in search of whatever it was that I wanted but found missing in my current life, something I associated with wanting to feel more independent, more self-confident, being more of an active and individual person

in the world rather than 'wife' or even 'public servant'. I wanted to find out how other people made changes in their lives, to understand their experiences of this, to learn more about how we can and actually do choose to determine our lives and identity.

As a result, my interests were drawn more and more towards the notion of personal development as a phenomenon of everyday life, not merely as an adjunct of training. I decided to inquire into how we develop, learn and change in the course of our lives and everyday experiencing, believing implicitly in our capacity to do so.

2. My practical aims

The next issue that required clarification was the question of the practical objectives of inquiry. What did I think 'research', and more specifically research in 'psychology' should be doing?

I rejected the idea that psychology is about finding the right answer to puzzles of behaviour, or that research should be concerned with developing an armour-plated logic which can somehow predict and explain everything that we find mystifying in ourselves and others, through reduction to a neat system of cause and effects.

I saw psychology as being concerned in essence with finding ways of understanding the nature of our experience as human beings, with all our complexities and illogical peculiarities - utilising the theories of science and philosophy as guides but never accepting them as dictates mistakenly assuming them to be capable of grasping the whole of human experience. I accepted that the ultimate validity of inquiry would lie in its capacity to develop a way of seeing, a view that is meaningful in the context of the contradictions and complexities of existence, our idiosyncracies and irregularities.

The object of inquiry was to open up ways of seeing and understanding which might enable us, not to be controlled and determined by others,

but to help ourselves. Locating psychology in the context of self-determination, and responsibility for self and others, I believed that its justification lay in its usefulness as a method for self-education and social education, and took the view that psychology should help to provide us with 'choices', possibilities for living, and facilitate and further communication and understanding between peoples.

As such, my practical aims were that the inquiry should be a method of learning for those who took part in it, facilitating choice and informed action in everyday life, and furthering mutual understanding. This would necessarily involve questioning the taken-for-granted world of everyday life, and inviting participants and readers alike to explore further the possibilities of their experiencing.

3. My conceptual aims

In addition to these practical aims I had three main conceptual aims when setting out on the inquiry :

(i) I wanted to understand other people's experiences of personal development and change, to be able to understand what it meant from their point of view, as unique individuals.

(ii) I wanted to be able to develop a theory on the basis of a shared understanding of their experiences, a theory grounded in real-life experience and reflecting a shared reality rather than the preconceptions of the researcher.

(iii) Indirectly and as a result of this, I wanted to understand the processes of theoretical construction - to experience for myself how we develop our theories about people, our 'models' of human life.

This was fostered by a suspicion of 'easy-theorising' and simplistic explanations, and by a questioning of the validity of the grounding of existing psychological theories in the real meaning of human experiences. I wanted to explore how it might be possible, or not, to develop

a theory which could be a true reflection of human experience, and which was genuinely useful and relevant to those it presumed to depict.

I believed that the experiences of individuals could assist in the development of generalisations and a common store of knowledge, but needed to understand for myself how the links were made between individual and society, between experience and concept, between what we know and how we know. I wanted, in other words, to understand the nature of the relationship between the obscure theoretical 'thing' and the real-life and experiences in which it is created, between the individual and the general.

In choosing the general kind of approach to follow in the development of theory I was interested by the view of William James that psychology should integrate both description and explanation (May 1961: 14-15), the former associated with a focus on personal experience as the original source of knowing and the development of understanding through the relation of experiences to individual purposes and ends; and the latter associated with understanding as explanation developed through the relation of experiences to the effects of external causes and universal laws.

Like James I saw these two perspectives as complementary and essential to our complete understanding, accepting that some kind of explanatory framework would be required in theoretical construction, but remembering that a theory is only one possible view, and only derives its validity from the location in and relation to the actual experiences of the individual. I wanted to develop an integrated kind of understanding in the dialectical manner summarised by Kvale (1976) as

> "a synthesis of empiricist observation and speculative rationalism through a descriptive and interpretative approach to the phenomena, whereby the emphasis is on knowing leading to action in a contradictory and changing world." (p.90)

CHAPTER 2

THE BEGINNINGS OF DESIGN

Setting out in enquiry, my first task was to establish an epistemological and methodological framework appropriate to my aims and interests, . . which would locate the research within prevailing philosophical traditions. I did not begin with a ready-made philosophy however as far as I was aware, but with an interest in a number of ideas from different directions about the nature of knowing, learning and human life. I should like to begin by discussing these foundational ideas of the enquiry.

1. Knowing as Experiential Learning

The idea of experiential learning and the 'experiential learning cycle' was one of the first laid foundation stones of enquiry, in its application both to my understanding of the subject area of personal development and in its application to the development of an epistemology and methodology of research. I was interested in the basic concept of the experiential learning cycle as described by Kolb and Fry (1975), and developed originally by Kurt Lewin as a model of small group learning. The experiential cycle takes the form of a progressive movement through the experiential dimensions of 'concrete experiencing', 'reflective observation', 'abstract conceptualisation', and 'active experimentation'.

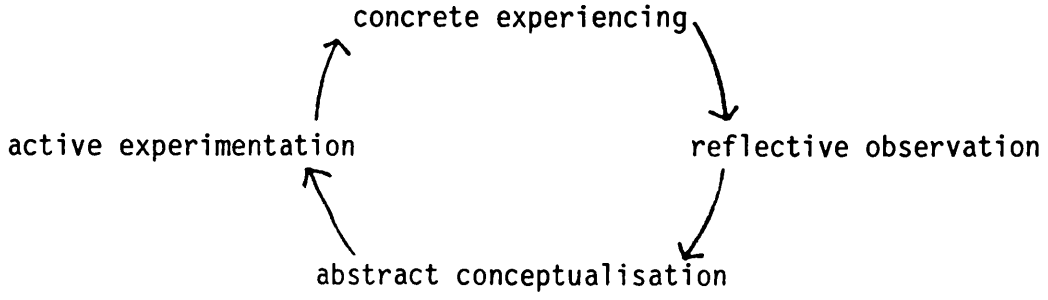


Figure 1 (Adapted from Figure 1 in Kolb & Fry (1975: 36)

The model was first developed as a learning cycle for effecting active and practical change, in which concrete experience forms the basis for thought and reflection. Concepts are assimilated in turn into a theory from which new implications or plans for action are deduced, which in turn serve as guides for new actions and experimentations.

The experiential learning cycle identifies the major formal elements inherent in the learning process, and a dialectical form of logic which is central to the thesis. The cycle presents learning as the process located in personal experience, employing two primary dimensions of human potential, each containing a dialectic of opposites. The two primary dimensions are those of concrete experiencing-abstract conceptualisation, and reflection-action, and represent the essential modes or orientations of learning: specific involvement (concrete experiencing) and general detachment (abstract conceptualisation), as actor (active experimentation) and observer (reflective observation). The point about the cycle is that it involves and integrates the processes generally associated with cognitive learning and conceptual analysis with learning achieved in personal experiencing. It demands that the learner makes contact with his/her experiencing as well as making sense of it through rational thought. He/she must be able to involve self fully, openly and without bias in new experiences; be able to reflect on and observe these experiences from many perspectives; and be able to create concepts that integrate observations into logically sound theories; and be able to use these theories to solve problems (Kolb & Fry, 1975: 34-36).

The cycle is 'dialectical' in so far as each aspect of it arises out of but also conflicts with its polar opposite.

"How can one act and reflect at the same time? How can one be concrete and immediate and still be theoretical?" ask Kolb and Fry. In order to understand more clearly the form of the dialectic and the

form as it is made explicit in the experiential learning process, I would like to turn at this point to consider the concept of dialectic as formal principle, and how it can be understood.

2. Dialectic

Rychlak (1976: 1-76) identifies a number of possible meanings and applications or interpretations of the concept of 'dialectic'. All, however, contain the inherent dimensions of (a) opposition, (b) unity and (c) arising in this, movement and change.

The most general and grandest meaning of dialectic is that of 'world principle', and in eastern and western thought. The classical scholars argued that opposition was fundamental to both the physical and conceptual worlds: Anaximander that the physical elements of the universe were held together by an opposition; Heraclitus that the bi-polarity of opposite meanings always exists in one - that 'left' means 'right'; and Socrates and Plato that there is an inherent dialectical totality which enabled everyday events to be linked to the realm of pure ideas. A search for a 'oneness in nature' is reflected in Hindu and Buddhistic philosophies, in their concepts of 'liberation' (moksa) and 'nirvana', and in the famous Chinese principle 'yin and yang', and the symbol representing the complementarity and interpenetration of the 'yin', female, passive receptive force and the 'yang' male, active and powerful force. A further description of world principle is found in Marxian materialism, in the conceptualisation of dialectical movements of class struggles through history, and in Hegel's formulation of a conceptual dialectic as a movement through thesis, antitheses and syntheses of belief.

A second main meaning identified by Rychlak inherent in 'dialectic' is that of 'valid organon', that is 'as a correct means or manner for coming to know the truth' - a translation which is derived from the dialectical form and meaning of the word 'meaning' as truth. As an

axiology, dialectics proposes that meanings are always bi-polar, that what is cannot be conceived without what is not, and that truth is always a unity of opposites, of positive and negative.

A third meaning identified by Rychlak lies in its association with the Kantian conceptualisation of thought as transcendental, the capacity of the individual to conceive ideas which transcend sensory experience, to reason by opposites and opposites of opposites until thought is far removed from the world of sensory experience and transcends it.

A fourth meaning, suggests Rychlak, is the interpretation of dialectic as 'the many in one', the unity in diversity, akin to the gestalt psychologist Koffka's formulation (1935) of a whole as a 'gestalt' which is more than simply the sum of its parts .

The term dialectic thus encompasses the world principle, a view of the nature of truth as it appears to us, a view of reality conceived through a dialectical progression of opposites, surpassing any contradictions by reasoning through them. Dialectics provides a model for understanding both "what is" and "how it is", in the concept of a meaning of any phenomenon as a unity achieved through a dynamic synthesis of opposites. A dialectic is both what it is and how it is. Its essential form is a contradictory relationship of both implication (poles in unity) and exclusion (poles in opposition) (Kvale, 1976: 92).

Dialectics provides a logic in which contradiction exists on three main levels - through 'interdependence' of and the demanding of opposites; through 'interpenetration' where opposites are found within each other; and through 'unity' where opposites turn into each other when pursued to their extreme, say Rowan and Reason (1981a:130-132).

Dialectics is a logic which emphasises radical changes and conflicts as the important loci of acquiring knowledge, where the new tendencies, superseding the old, are breaking through to become real, writes Kvale (1976: 94).

3. Dialectics and Experiential Learning

In turning again to the learning cycle, the concepts of dialectic as valid organon, as a means of coming to know the many in one, as a gestalt, as a unity of opposites developed through conflict and change have an evident application. We see how 'learning' can be conceptualised as a whole, a unity of conflicting elements which in practice may exclude each other but are all essential to the whole.

It is a whole which can therefore only be achieved through movement, through a progression from one dimension to another, from being an actor to being an observer and vice versa. At the same time there exists an ideal unity of interdependence and interpenetration of the conflicting dimensions of the poles of each dimension.

This actual opposition but ideal unity is made more explicit if we look at each of the dimensions of the learning cycle.

3.1 The Dialectic of Concrete Experiencing - Abstract Conceptualisation

The inherent relationship of unity and conflict between these two poles is described by Smillie (1956). He identifies these points of view as 'Perception' and 'Thought', describing and differentiating them in the following terms.

'Perception', as located in concrete experiencing, is:

> "a personal point of view deriving from our own unique experiences and perceptions ... an 'immanent' orientation which refers to the underlying quality of what is real ... reality is not something 'out there' or 'in here' ... (It) is from this point of view, a process of being or better of becoming ... To communicate this attitude toward reality either one is forced into the language of mysticism or slips into language that is abstractive and carries the very denial of this point of view even if we can describe it" (pp. 99-103)

In opposition to perception, however, is 'thought' described as:

> "'abstractive' ... established through a system of socially shared symbols and concepts ... the world has meaning in so far as it can be shared and communicated ... reality is existence distinct from the knower ... is something that has been and will continue to be in the absence of experience ... personal experience taken by itself is treated with doubt." (pp.99-104)

In Smillie's description of these two poles of experiencing which approximate to concrete experiencing and abstract conceptualisation, each orientation apparently excludes the other but each can be known to exist only in their differentiation from the other. Each, in other words, always demands and implies the other in their definition, and in their existence.

The differentiation and essential unity of the two poles is further clarified by Kolb and Fry's elaboration (1975: 36) of the qualities of abstract conceptualisation as defined by Goldstein and Scheerer (1941: 4) including such qualities as being able to shift reflectively from one aspect of a situation to another, to hold in mind several aspects simultaneously, to isolate and synthesise parts of a given whole, to plan ahead; while concrete experiencing is to them a 'childlike' orientation, lacking these qualities.

I associated concrete experiencing with the unquestioning, un-reflective, un-selfconscious kind of reality experienced in childhood, which as soon as it is communicated becomes an element of thought. Perception though is not enough for us, and we develop the capacity to stand back, the need to question and to evaluate in order to understand other people and things in their relation to us. But the perpetual conflict is epitomised perhaps in our tendency to seek to reject the reality of the feelings and emotional experience of concrete experiencing in favour of abstraction, to put 'mind over matter' in our adult life.

3.2 The Dialectic of Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation

Kolb and Fry see reflection and action as opposites, the one tending to inhibit the other. They appear in an implicit relationship of inter-dependence which is not dissimilar from the relationship between abstraction and experiencing, where action is the primary pole, but cannot exist without reflection, without the capacity to know of it, to observe.

(The difference between abstract conceptualisation and reflection is not immediately obvious, both being aspects of thinking, but I interpret 'reflection' here to mean the basic act of thinking in its simplest form of being aware of something as an object of thought, the act of knowing, while abstract conceptualisation is associated with the actual qualities of thinking, our capacity to categorise and so on.)

This relationship between reflective thought and action is described by MacMurray (1969) who argues that there can be no such thing as pure thought, that is reflection, in a world where existence means being part of the world in an active systematic causal relation, and means being self-determining. Without action we could not determine our lives and influence the world and choose; and the Kantian 'romanticism' which suggests that there is a real world unknowable by us, of which the world constructed by thought is only the appearance, is untenable, says MacMurray. For how can we act, and know anything concrete in an unreal world?

Rather than take the premise of "cogito ergo sum", the view of self as thinker, MacMurray proposes a view of self as agent in which

> "Action.. is a full concrete activity of the self in which all our capacities are employed,while thought is constituted by the exclusion of some of our powers and withdrawal into an activity which is less concrete and less complete" (p.86)

Action is inclusive of thought, but not vice-versa:

> "the concept of action is inclusive ... thought on the other hand is an exclusive concept and therefore negative." (pp.87-88)

For in action, MacMurray suggests, the body is active, also the mind. This is not, however, necessarily so in thought, which may require only the action of the mind. Hence action is viewed as 'primary' and 'concrete', the part of our experience which establishes our sense of actuality or reality in the world, in self-affirmation. Thought is 'secondary, abstract and descriptive'. To live in 'pure thought' is to exclude self from the world - and to be non-existent, and is self-negating.

Nevertheless, thought is essential. For, as MacMurray suggests:

> "If I did not know that I was acting I should not be acting". (p.102)

He sees both thought and action as integrated into a 'personal unity' or 'organic unity' - in a dialectical pattern in which the elements are qualitatively different and functionally related by their complementary contributions to a unity of development . Hence, says MacMurray, the unity of self contains and is constituted by a practical contradiction between its elements. While action is almost primary in the dialectic and there would be no thought without action, without thought and reflection there would be no knowledge of self in action. Each demands the other.

The implicit dialectical relationship of knowing and action, reflection and action, was something that I accepted as a basic premise of the inquiry.

4. Amplification of the Dialectic: (1) The problem of the Jungian Typology, and (2) the Solution in Rowan's Dialectical Cycle

Is 'knowing' however such a neat and simple process as the four dialectical poles imply? How is the conflict actually manifested in our individual experiencing and learning, and how might our individual capacities for learning differ? And what other dimensions or dialectics can be found in the process of our learning? First of all I would like to turn to the issue of conflict, with reference to the Jungian typology.

4.1 The Jungian typology and orienting functions

In his theory of 'Psychological Types' (1971), Jung distinguishes between four primary psychological functions which help us to ascertain and evaluate our experience - the functions of thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition. He writes:

> "The essential function of sensation is to establish that something exists, thinking tells us what it means, feeling what its value is, and intuition surmises whence it comes and whither it goes." (para. 983)

In thinking, says Jung, we are concerned with judgements about the significance of what something means and depends upon the way in which we deal with the facts; in feeling we depend upon the feeling value attributed to the experience; in sensation we are concerned with the hard facts, the perception of concrete actualities; in intuition, with a reality which only seems to count in so far as it seems to harbour possibilities, regardless of the way things actually are in the present.

The problem is that thinking and feeling are both 'rational' functions of discrimination and evaluation and as such are directly opposed to one another, likewise the 'irrational' functions of sensation and intuition which are concerned simply with what happens, in actuality or potentiality. Jung continues (1971):

> "Sensation, the fonction du reel, rules out any simultaneous intuitive activity, since the latter is not concerned with the present but is rather a sixth sense for hidden possibilities, and therefore should not allow itself to be unduly influenced by existing reality. In the same way, thinking is opposed to feeling, because thinking should not be influenced or deflected from its purpose by feeling values just as feeling is usually vitiated by too much reflection. The four functions therefore form, when arranged diagrammatically, a cross with a rational axis at right angles to an irrational axis." (para. 983)

Adopting the polar opposition of thinking and feeling and of sensation and intuition -

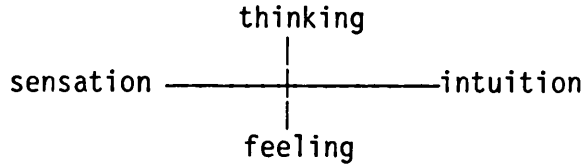


Figure 2

- then characteristically we will be either a thinking person or a feeling person, and either a sensing person or an intuiting person; and, according to Jung, may show a predominant preference for the rational or the irrational pole, being a 'thinking type' and so on.

In Jung's theory, this typology is combined with the predominant attitude type of either extraversion or introversion, the extravert focusing his/her attention on the outside world and its objects, the introvert on the interior world of self.

Applying Jung's theory to the experiential learning cycle, then it becomes obvious that if we characteristically predominate in certain combinations, or in a particular pole in combination with extraversion or introversion to the exclusion of any other orientations or attitude, then our capacity for entering into all of the poles of the learning cycle will be severely handicapped.

A thinking-intuiting person for example may exclude the personal emotions and bodily sensations of concrete experiencing, particularly if combined with extraversion. Or a feeling-sensing person may exclude reflection and conceptualisation, particularly if combined with introversion. Any imbalance of introversion might well inhibit the capacity for action, for active experimentation, which I would interpret as a pole essentially concerned with relationship to the world.

Accepting the Jungian differentiation of characteristic types, experiential learning becomes more complex, with an inherent potential for conflict which is not resolved through a natural unity. The problem is how to avoid getting stuck with our characteristic preferences for the way in which we learn, which may inhibit our capacity to engage in the whole of the dialectic of the learning cycle.

One solution may be found in Rowan's dialectical research cycle, which I would like to turn to next.

4.2 Rowan's Dialectical Research Cycle

In Rowan's cycle (1981), the stages are identified as 'Being', 'Thinking', 'Project', 'Encounter', 'Making Sense' and 'Communication', Being approximating roughly I would suggest to concrete experiencing,

Thinking to reflective observation, Project to abstract conceptualisation, and Encounter and Communication to active experimentation, while Making Sense combines both thought processes.

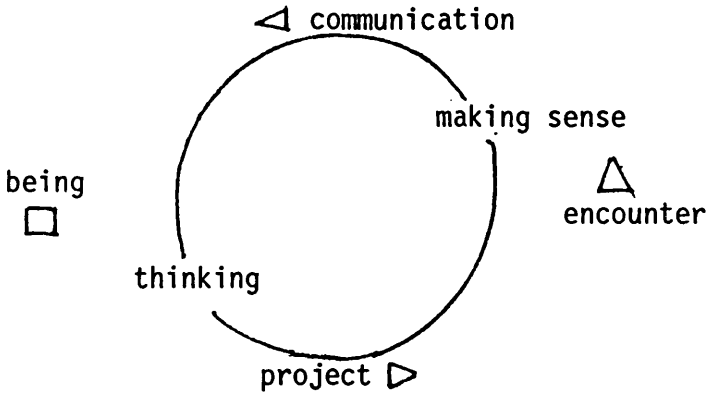


Figure 3 (Adapted from Figure 9.1 in Rowan, 1981: 98)

According to Rowan, it is the experience of conflict in the form of a kind of dissatisfaction that prompts us to move in the natural course of our learning (and in his context in the course of our research) from one pole of the cycle to the next, so that we eventually progress through all the elements no matter at which pole we start. He describes the process as follows (1981):

> "(in being) existing practice seems to be inadequate ... (in thinking) Philosophizing any further would be sterile and useless ... (in project) Plans are not what is needed. Action itself is the thing to get into ... (in encounter) action is not enough. I must withdraw and find out what it means ... (in making sense) Analysis is not enough. I must start telling people what it means ... (in communication) I do not want to turn into a communicator, I want to get back to some real work". (pp. 98-100)

The implication is that if we systematically follow the steps of the cycle then we can learn to engage in all of the contradictory poles of the experiential dialectic, without getting stuck in the conflict of polar opposition.

But this is not the only contribution made by Rowan's cycle. A second kind of solution to overcoming the problems of the dialectic is implicit in the additional elements of the action stages and following,

in the elaboration of this aspect to include 'encounter' and 'communication', hand in hand with the thought processes of 'making sense'. It is through 'encounter' and 'communication' that we can learn and make sense. It is in encounter and communication that we do find encapsulated the unity of the dialectic, that we may engage in both experiencing and abstracting, in both acting and reflecting. These elements together contain the potential for the crucial move of the dialectic from conflict to unity, to a new whole of understanding. It is through verbal and non-verbal encounter and dialogue with others and with the world that we essentially make sense of our experiencing, through participation and communication in the social world.

As such, learning is not only a process of personal reflexive learning, but it must be a complementary process of knowing self and knowing others and the world, knowing self through the world and the world through self. The two types of knowing are interdependent, and are realised in our capacities for engagement and dialogue with one another.

I should like now to consider the nature of the third dialectic of the learning cycle.

4.3 The Dialectic of Making Sense through Encounter and Communication - Self and Other

In Rowan's cycle, the movement of making sense takes place first through an active encounter and engagement with others, then through a withdrawal into reflection upon what the experience 'means', to a further verbal engagement, to communication with others, not only to tell them about the experience but to clarify understanding. The cycle highlights the point that learning through encounter and communication is essentially directed towards 'understanding', understanding the 'meaning' of experiences and actions.

According to Polyani (1959: 22) personal understanding or 'comprehending' is a process involving three kinds of knowing - what we intend,

what we mean and what we are doing. Understanding involves understanding our thoughts, what we are wanting to say (qu'est ce que je veux dire) as well as what we see happening. It involves crossing the line between 'tacit' knowing as an intra-personal phenomenon underlying our personal world of experience, and knowing made explicit or articulated in observable action. It involves crossing the line between and integrating knowing as something experienced in a direct perceptual relationship and knowing as something inferred or observed and existing apart from the knower, between perception and conception.

In learning and understanding ourselves and our experience, the normal and natural way is through communication with others, through action and language. Learning is essentially a dialectic of self and other in communication - verifying what is real in our personal experience through articulation and explication, through the act of expression. It is the way in which we can understand and come to know each other and the natural world, verifying that the meaning we perceive is the same as that experienced by the other.

In accepting the idea of learning as dialectic of self and other, I accepted the premise that we can understand each other; that we can develop a shared understanding; that our personal worlds can be penetrated by another - and indeed that we only fully understand ourselves through fostering this communication and participation in each other's worlds of meaningful experience.

The argument that 'knowledge' is a social phenomenon, that it is inter-subjective, experienced subjectively, and yet shared externally by others is presented elsewhere by Berger and Luckmann (1967).

Language is viewed as the 'instrument' of the process and through its symbols and shared sign system of words, a social stock of knowledge is developed. Socialisation is viewed as a process in which the indi-

vidual first identifies and internalises and comes to accept as his or her own the meanings of objectively or externally experienced events, to develop mutual explanation of shared situations. Socialisation is associated with the capacity 'to participate in another's being'. The development of personal identity and self-awareness is assumed to proceed through social participation and communication.

The argument that we need to develop the quality of our participation and communication beyond the level of common-sense knowledge if we are to really understand one another, is given by Buber (1965) and Schutz (1972).

Buber (1965) differentiates between genuine dialogue, technical dialogue, and monologue:

> "There is genuine dialogue - no matter whether spoken or silent - where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. There is technical dialogue which is prompted solely by the need of objective understanding. And there is monologue disguised as dialogue, in which two or more men, meeting in space, speak each with himself in strangely tortuous and circuitous ways and yet imagine they have escaped the torment of being thrown back on their own resources ... He who is living the life of monologue is never aware of the other as something that is absolutely not himself and at the same time something with which he nevertheless communicates."

Monologue destroys the dialectic.

Genuine dialogue, however, is more than a dialogue of language, understanding the meaning of each other's words. According to Buber it is a way of living, of being, of living in reciprocity. The life of dialogue he suggests involves the movement of turning towards the other, bodily and spiritually entering into a reciprocal relationship with the other as 'Thou', and 'Thou' with me, allowing there to be a participation in each other's being. Monologue, in contrast, denies this mutual participation, letting the other exist only as a part of the experience of oneself - in other words, as an extension of one's

own identity. In monologue, self never really communicates with the other; and it is quite possible to live at the level of monologue never really achieving a shared and reciprocally defining understanding.

In Schutz (1972), the question of how we can really understand the meaning of each other's experiences and actions is explored further. How can we comprehend the intended meaning of another Schutz asks, which may well be different from understanding the sign that he is using, and involves understanding both the context of the meaning, the system of signs in which it is located, and the context of his motivation. If a man is chopping wood, for example, do we understand that he is doing something 'in order to do something' or 'because of something' - and how do we know that our understanding of either of these perspectives is accurate?

Schutz proposes that comprehension must begin by attention to the 'inner lived experience' as opposed to outer observed actions in the other, and must involve expression, verbalisation and explication of one's own comprehension which is based on personal experience and, especially, questioning. By questioning and asking 'have I understood you' Schutz suggests, attention can shift to deep layers up to now unobserved. It is also vital to establish that one's own conclusions about the nature of the relationship with the other, the extent of one's knowledge about the other are verified by the other.

The dialectic of self and other is implicit in our lives, in our language and in everyday learning, the one contributing to the understanding of the other - if we are to get beyond the level of everyday assumptions, to really understand the personal experiential world of another, then as Buber and Schutz propose, we must attend fully to the other, encounter and engage with the other using all our bodily and mental capacities for communication, and above all question.

5. Further features of experiential learning

These ideas describe the basic form of the experiential learning dialectic; but there are two further aspects which are secondary and complementary to the basic dialectic which I also accepted as fundamental to inquiry. The first of these is the perspective of causality that is inherent in the learning cycle, a perspective of 'relative determinism'; and the second, the parallel between learning and the achievement of dialectical unity and the conceptualisation of learning in terms of the principles of 'gestalt' formation, previously alluded to in the discussion of dialectic (p.11 above).

5.1 Learning, Self-direction and Relative Determinism

A further basic assumption implicit in the concept of experiential learning is the assumption that learning is both self-directed and relatively determined. Experiential learning focuses on taking charge of one's life, making and taking decisions, learning from experience in order to find new ways of acting and being. It pre-empts the suggestion that there is an external causal agency directing our lives. Through action we have the opportunity to transform the world.

But MacMurray (1969) and Heron (1971) point out the paradoxical nature of the concept of self-direction as self-determination. In action we presuppose that we determine the world by our actions says MacMurray, but if we really do determine our lives completely there can be "no thing" to learn, and the world must be totally unknowable if it is to be totally undetermined.

Heron, approaching the issue in criticism of philosophies which suggest that the antecedent conditions can ever be established, argues that causal explanations of experience can never be possible because it is impossible to establish absolute antecedent conditions. With every act of explanation, a new condition is established, a new context to take into account. No explanation can be absolute, but is always

being determined by those who participate in its development. But at the same time how can we be totally self-determining, given that we are also a part of the world - and that our behaviour as researchers or learners is guided by the principles of method, the principles of scientific truth-telling, and by our own principles of what is right and wrong? As the dialectics of learning suggest - how can we be totally autonomous, given the dialectic of self and other, the acceptance of our tacit commitment to and awareness of prevailing social norms?

Heron proposes that self-determination is set rather in a context of 'relative determinism'; developed by both inner needs and outer physical circumstances; and that it involves autonomous self-directed commitment integrated with commitment to social principles and purposes.

This was certainly something that made sense to me in everyday life. I accepted a view of learning as the expression of self-direction notwithstanding and through the conditions imposed upon our lives by external constraints, and by our social participation. In a dialectical framework the relationship is clear. Self-direction develops in a mutually interactive and interdependent relationship of self-others or self-world, through the dialectics of concrete experiencing - abstract conceptualisation, of reflection-action, and in communication and dialogue.

5.2 Knowing as 'gestalt' - the holistic dynamic model and comprehension

In the basic conceptualisation of learning as a dialectic of opposites in which unity emerges through conflict, the way in which this unity is formed to give understanding or comprehension of a phenomenon may be viewed in terms of the 'gestalt' principles of perception.

A further major assumption underlying the inquiry was my acceptance of the notions of 'wholeness' and 'gestalt' as the primary ways of structuring our experience and conceptualising and understanding ourselves - gestalt being the particular kind of whole which is more than

the sum of its parts. The term stems from the work of the gestalt psychologists Koffka (1935), and Köhler (1947) and research into perception, which was found to be organised in terms of gestalts characterised by figure-ground formation; by a response to proximation, constancy of stimuli and pragnanz (good form). While we tend to perceive the figure or only part of the whole, the whole of the figure and ground is more than the sum of the figures, which are always set in a wider perceptual context or ground.

The act of comprehension according to Polyani (1959: 29-33) is a process of gestalt formation where we advance from a knowledge of the parts to the understanding of the whole, through attention to our 'subsidiary' awareness and 'particulars' as well as the 'focal' meanings.

Attention only to the particulars can destroy the focus and therefore the whole; but attention to the focal points can ignore the particulars and never perceive the whole. Comprehension in the gestalt framework is a continuous dialectical movement between focal and subsidiary awareness, between whole and part and part and whole.

Parallels with this and a development of the notion of the 'whole' to refer to the total pattern of interaction of which he or she who perceives is a part, may be found in the concept of 'holographic' vision and developments in thinking in the field of the physical sciences, where our image of reality is compared to a hologram (Schwartz and Ogilvy, 1979: 33; Bohm, 1980: 177). The particles which we assume to constitute the world are not viewed as separate parts of the universe, perceived in a point to point correspondence of image and object, but are the result of an underlying and invisible structure of 'interference' patterns, interactions of light beams.

The dialectical relation and differentiation between part and whole is reflected in Bohm's distinction between an 'explicate' order, that is, the order of the parts which we perceive as separate objects, and

an 'implicate' order, that is, the total pattern of flowing, 'undivided wholeness' of the universe, which is enfolded into everything. The implicate order is only made manifest in part through our explicate structures, which are in themselves a part of the flux, an interaction within it.

The formation of the figures of the 'gestalt' are consonant with the images of explicate order. Bohm writes (1980):

> "... The overall law (holonomy) may be assumed to be such that in a certain sub-order, within the whole set of implicate order, there is a totality of forms that have an approximate kind of recurrence, stability and separability. Evidently these forms are capable of appearing as the relatively solid, tangible, and stable elements that make up our 'manifest' world." (p.186)

I adopted the view that understanding the meaning of our experiences and actions is akin to a process of developing progressive and successive gestalts of meaning, gaining insight into the whole through our images of the parts, through our language and active participation in the world, through an experiential process in which perception is integrated with conception and the full use of all of our experiential capacities is required if we are to get anywhere near the implicate order or the whole. For in accordance with the gestalt theory, partial or one-sided participation in the dialectic will produce a distorted whole or figure where our understanding is incomplete at any point of time; and the passing of time itself and constant stream of experiencing ensure that our potential for learning never ends. I accepted that view that there will always be new contradictions and new experiences to engage in, and that each new synthesis of understanding must give way to another, in the manner defined by Merleau-Ponty (1967: 177) as 'structuration'. In structuration, each new gestalt in the present is informed by and reconstructs the understanding of the past in a new form, a new structure of experiencing and action, which is yet only a part of an ever changing whole.

These ideas about the learning process were one of the two fundamental strands of interest which were to inform both the methodology and the subject matter of inquiry. There was also another complementary set of ideas which were particularly important in shaping the direction of the subject of inquiry. These were the ideas extending and developing the learning dialectic beyond a cognitive and perceptual perspective, to a perspective encompassing the whole person, and personal development.

I was struck by the way in which both 'personality' theorists and 'personal development' theorists adopt the notions of 'wholes' and 'wholeness' in their conceptual models. It was the further consideration of these models that led to the clarification of the focus of my own interests in exploring 'personal development' as a dialectic of learning and experiencing through life. In this second section I shall begin by outlining the general perspective that I adopted of the human 'gestalt'; and subsequently discuss the implications of the holistic-dynamic model for understanding the process of our development.

6. Dialectics and Personal Development

6.1 The Human Gestalt

Angyal (1941), a personality theorist, describes the gestalt as follows :

> "The whole is never structureless ... the lines of division are prescribed by the structure of the whole itself. The parts ... which will be obtained by such division are real holistic units ... the study of such parts will at the same time be a study of the characteristics of the whole ... Wholes are characterised by being organised according to a main principle to which all the part structures and part functions are subordinated." (pp.13-14)

Lecky (1961) echoes this -

> "The observer must be able to find as a means of unifying his interpretation a common purpose in all of the phenomena of an individual organism's behaviour". (p.118)

Our experiencing and actions are viewed as being organised according to an integrated and changing pattern reflecting an inherent teleological

unity, where the experiencing and actions of any one part or aspect will be based upon, and are comprehended as gestalts in terms of, the essential principles characterising the whole. These principles are typically associated with a theory of motivation, and according to Lecky (1961: 151), there is only one source of motivation, a 'universal dynamic principle'.

This approach is reflected in Maslow's psychology of personality where the unifying principle is that of 'self-actualization', defined by Maslow (1943) as being all that one can possibly be, fulfilling all personal capacities or 'potential' for experiencing and action; or in Allport (1963) where the principle is that of 'functional autonomy'; or in Lecky (1961), where the principle is that of 'self-consistency' translated as an inherent need for wholeness itself. The goal for which the individual strives is the maintenance of a unified organisation says Lecky (1961: 118).

There are two main arguments for the application of the gestalt view to the models of the human personality. The first argument, which is from behaviour, is put by Goldstein (1963), in relation to his work with brain damaged patients who were found to develop compensatory behavioural adjustments when deprived of the part of their brain holding the capacity for abstraction.

> "the destruction of one or another substratum of the organism gives rise to various changes in behaviour showing how the substrata and forms of behaviour are inter-related and giving an insight into the organisation of the total organism." (p.32)

He proposes that all behaviour is organised according to the principle of self-actualization - in his definition the need to fulfil those performances which are the most important for the organism. Behaviour in its entirety represents the total mode of the adjustment of the individual in coming to terms with the environment given that total self-actualisation is never realistically possible; and aspects of

behaviour can only be understood accordingly in the total context of self-actualization and self-regulation. Thus 'the whole' is what the human being is capable of, it is his or her potential, and an understanding of a given state of affairs can only be achieved in the context of the whole of the capabilities of the individual and capacity for achieving the best possible 'coming to terms' with the world.

The second argument derives from the metaphor of wholeness itself. Wholeness implies perfection, an ideal, healthiness, and a wholesome state. We conceptualise ourselves as wholes rather than as particular atoms, quite naturally. The positive connotations of wholeness are naturally attractive when we wish to describe ourselves, particularly in the context of development.

I generally accepted the concept of wholeness as the primary metaphor understanding how we comprehend, and for conceptualising ourselves. But there are, given this, many possible permutations in the structuring of the whole, differentiated in the main by the emphasis and primacy given respectively to the whole or its parts.

I was especially interested in the kind of dialectical whole described as 'interdependent' or 'organicist' by Bahm (1967; 1980). This is described as whole in which parts of wholes are in some sense wholes in their own right and have their own parts with which they also interdepend. The complementary dialectic of part and whole is clear in interdependence - Bahm (1967):

> "interdependence involves complementarity of opposites and dynamic interdependence entails interaction". (p.253)

In an interdependent model, the nature of the interaction between the polarity of part and whole is the key to our understanding, he suggests (1980: 233).

An interdependent whole is differentiated from other kinds of part-whole systems as follows (Bahm, 1980) :

> "Holism (ultimate reality is a whole without parts, except as illusory manifestations; apprehended intuitively), emergentism (parts exist together and their relations, connections and organised interaction constitute wholes that continue to depend upon them for their existence and nature; understood first analytically and then synthetically), structuralism (the universe is a whole within which all systems and their processes exist as depending parts; understanding can be aided by creative deduction ..." (p.233)

Only interdependence invites the full potential of the dialectical gestalt where we are at one and the same time part and whole, part and yet not part, whole and yet not whole; where neither the parts and their interactions determine the whole nor the whole determines the parts; but where part and whole are in constant relation and interaction which brings a new form of the whole, a new relation of part and whole, changes in the form of the parts and in the whole; where there are many possible forms of the whole, in ideality and actuality. Only interdependence supports a view of our experience as one of eternal contradiction and conflict, and a philosophy of relative determinism.

I generally accepted the guidance of this model, but with caution, remembering that conceptualising begins with our own experiencing and that the metaphor and model are only appropriate in so far as they fit actual experiencing.

6.2 The human gestalt - implications for a dialectical model of personal development

Adopting the view put forward by Goldstein, that the process of our development is all about achieving the most complete 'actualization' of our potential - whether in the sense that he elucidates as follows (1963):

> "the normal person is driven by his inherent desire for new experiences, for the conquest of the world and for the expansion of the sphere of his activity in a practical and spiritual sense.." (p.111)

or whether in the sense described more fully by Maslow (1968), where

> "the powers of the person come together in a particularly

> efficient and intensely enjoyable way in which he is more integrated and less split, more open for experience, more idiosyncratic, more perfectly expressive or spontaneous or fully functioning, more creative, more humourous, more ego-transcending, more independent of his lower needs ..." (p.97)

or whether in the way defined by Fromm (1949):

> "All organisms have an inherent tendency to actualize their specific potentialities. The aim of man's life therefore is to be understood as the unfolding of his powers according to the laws of his nature." (pp.119-120)

- the key questions for inquiry were "How do we experience this process as dialectic of part and whole? through our lives? What does it mean to feel part of what we might be? What does it mean to be "self-actualizing, to be 'whole'? How do we learn through our experiencing, and participation in the social world, to become more whole? How do we each manage the contradiction of the dialectic? Do some people feel more whole than others? How can we direct our own lives and help others towards self-actualization?

There were two particular dimensions of the dialectic which seemed important. The first was that of the obvious dialectic between partiality and wholeness, the question of how we experience and find ways of resolving the conflicts and contradictions in our lives to achieve a sense of ourselves as whole; and the second the question of the inherent dialectic between constancy and change, of the extent and quality of our 'change' in the process of development.

The dialectic of part-whole

In my own mind I could understand the dialectic as something that has its source in our capacities for idealisation and projection, for wanting to become more than the present, however this might be defined - whether associated with our hopes, needs, aspirations and aims directed towards our activities in the world, or with the use of our particular gifts and skills.

It seemed to me that the fundamental key to the dialectic and to

the experience of contradiction in our lives is our capacity to see beyond the present, to always go on to greater things, to aspire to a greater 'happiness', being in itself a source of dissatisfaction with the present and of hope for the future, of the experience of partiality and wholeness.

But development is not a simple process of self-actualization. Existing literature and the evidence of everyday experience suggest that the potential for continuing conflict, for living in contradiction without perhaps ever finding a new form of unity, is endless, particularly if we accept the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic differentiation between the conscious and unconscious processes of the psyche, and the inherent potential for conflict in the interaction of the two.

I was interested in Jung's view of development as a process of 'individuation', which is never achieved in its entirety and only in part with difficulty. "Wholeness" to Jung means becoming "in-dividual", at one with oneself without internal division (1959a, para. 490). He writes (1954):

> "... the achievement of personality means nothing less than the optimum development of the whole individual human being .. the supreme realisation of the innate idiosyncracy of a living being ... the absolute affirmation of all that constitutes the individual ... fidelity to the laws of one's own being". (para. 289-296)

This may involve realising all of our capacities for experiencing and judgement (see pp. 15-17 above). More specifically, individuation is associated with the further integration of all aspects of personality, and with the assimilation into conscious experience of the contents of the 'archetypes' of the 'collective unconscious', common to all, principally those of the 'shadow' and the 'anima' or 'animus'. Jung describes them as follows (1959a):

> "... the minority of genes belonging to the other sex does not simply disappear. A man therefore has in him a feminine side, an unconscious feminine figure - a fact of which he is generally unaware. ... I have called this figure the 'anima',

and its counterpart in women the 'animus' ...

> Another no less important and clearly defined figure is the 'shadow'. Like the anima it appears either in projection on suitable persons, or personified in dreams ... The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly - for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies." (paras. 512-513)

The theory is that these 'archetypes', which are common to all of us are typically disassociated from our conscious experience and confined to unconsciousness by social pressures to conform and please, to achieve socially defined goals, and by our adoption of an ideal, a social mask or 'persona', described (1953) as the ideal picture of a man as he should be.

The nub of the problem and the conflict is that our idealised 'whole', our ideal identity and self-experience may be an illusion; and even if we are unaware in our earlier adulthood of the conflict between our 'inner nature' and archetypes of the collective unconscious, the conflict may be experienced in mid-life when former ideals and goals seem meaningless.

'Parts' of ourselves may never be actualized.

A different but no less well-known perspective of our potential to live in unresolved conflict as a result of the interaction of conscious with unconscious processes is presented in the work of Freud (1856-1939) through his developing conceptualisation of the structure of the psyche - first through the 'affect-trauma' frame of reference, where the psyche is pictured as a defensive process seeking to maintain a low and constant level of excitation, with the ability to 'repress' or push back into unconscious experience thoughts and feelings aroused by traumatic experiences; subsequently through the 'topographical' frame of reference where the process is located in the context of an unconscious system containing within itself the resources for excitation,

the 'primary' process instinctual and sexual drives for pleasure, and a 'preconscious' and 'conscious' system containing the 'secondary' processes of logic and rationality, the capacity to keep order and control in accordance with external reality; and finally through the 'structural' frame of reference, where the inherent conflict between our instincts for pleasure and the external world are translated into the conflicting elements of the psyche. The 'id', is the harbourer of the unconscious instinctual drives, the 'super-ego' gives the conscious image of how the person should be, harbouring the conscience and ideal image, both being mediated by the preserver of order - the 'ego' (Sandler, Dare and Holder, 1972: 127-141).

While not adopting Freud's own view that any striving for perfection, any kind of self-actualization is necessarily the result of instinctual repression, I accepted the most simple interpretation of Freud's theories (1955; 1957; 1961; 1964), that our instincts and needs for pleasurable experiences and the gratification of our desires can lead to a level of physical and emotional arousal; and that although in the normal course of events when our needs are not gratified, we can transfer our energies into other satisfying activities, or in the loss of a loved one can identify ourselves with the characteristics loved in the other, and by accepting them into and changing in ourselves overcome the loss (1955; 1961), we may also embark on defensive strategies which do not help us to adapt. I accepted the view that 'repression' may be counter-productive, when the content or the 'idea' of the experience is repressed but the emotional energy is transformed into a pathological reaction such 'anxiety hysteria' (1957), an inexplicable phobia of something else; or when the simultaneous experiences of desire and prohibition lead the individual to adopt a strategy of 'splitting'. In splitting the prohibition is accepted and the idea repressed but the forbidden

gratification is pursued at the same time by investment in a different object of attention (1964).

I was interested in Freud's view that historical influences and trauma in childhood may first establish a pattern of repression, a fixation, which is upheld in later life when the individual is faced with experiences associative of the trauma. I accepted the general implications of the theories that our capacity to separate the content of our thoughts from our sexual and other instincts and emotions contains the potential for conflict through the pursuit of an ideal which denies parts of ourselves and our emotional experience, and that the conflict may be exacerbated by the fact that the energy of our primary process feelings can only ever be suppressed and continues to fight back in search of some means of discharge.

The theories of both Jung and Freud highlight the point that development is always development 'in' the world, and cannot be something that cuts us off from it. Self-actualization, is not simply a process of attaining personal ideals, but must be one of integration with the world, of being at one with the world and with the lives and experiences of others.

This is a point which is illustrated by the somewhat simpler gestalt schema of Goldstein (1963):

> "This tendency towards actualization is primary but can achieve its end only through a conflict with the opposing forces of the environment." (p.112)

It was obvious to me in my own life and experience that conflict is endemic in our work life, where the experience of personal happiness and satisfaction is subordinated to the economic survival and efficiency of the organisations we work for, which are in turn subordinated to the dictates of national politics and to the survival of the country's economy as a whole. How, given a soul-destroying job, can an individual

nevertheless experience and develop a sense of personal development? How can the conflicts be resolved?

In personal life too, in our relationships with others, conflict with the interests of others seemed a vital issue. How do we achieve our own personal wants, needs, desires, enabling another to do the same, particularly where they conflict? This was something that I had not found an answer to in my own marriage. I was struck by the words of Miller (1976):

> "It is difficult to see one's way all alone, to have a true vision about which aspects of conflict are appropriate or inappropriate, to know when we have the right to ask or assert and when we are making exaggerated or distorted demands." (pp.138-9)

I accepted that the development of identity, becoming the person that we want to be, finding the synthesis between part and whole, between actuality and possibility, must be a process of conflict with the world, in our work and relationships; and must involve negotiation, adaptation to and accommodation of the needs and demands of others, if we are to be at one with the world, rather than denying the actuality of its existence. It must in this sense be a process of some kind of 'integration'.

The question for inquiry was how do we each develop an identity which is integrated in the world, an identity that is social as well as individual, how do we experience the conflicts and how are they resolved?

The dialectic of constancy and change

The second dimension of identity that emerged in the phenomenological framework is that of constancy and change:

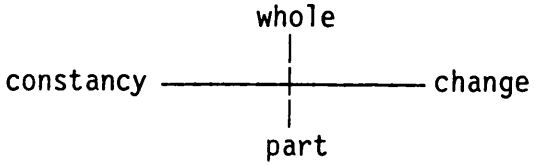


Figure 4

In the learning model previously described, wholeness is associated with the apprehension of a consistent, and to this extent essential, meaning in experiences, the apprehension of something that holds true through time. The paradox is that this core is only made explicit, made known, through many changes in meaning, through taking up new points of view and rejecting others, through the formation of successive experiential gestalts.

In the context of our everyday lives, how do we find this balance between change and constancy? How much do we need to change to find the core of constancy in ourselves? What is it that changes and how do we experience it?

I began with the idea that we certainly need to be flexible in our attitudes and behaviours, that we need to be open to learning from our experiences, and that psychological survival, let alone development, demands change in the sense of being able to adapt to circumstances, as well as in the sense of being able to put our plans into action, to turn possibility into actuality. I accepted the viewpoint that rigidity in our attitudes and behaviours inhibits our integration in the world and the achievement of our ideals, and that development is essentially a process of learning and creativity which demands individual initiative, action and participation in the world, a preparedness for change.

I felt too that change is something that arrives even if we do not seek it; that our interests, hopes and desires change naturally through the course of time; and that development demands the ability to recognise and to live with a natural rhythm of change in life and personal identity.

But at the same time, I could identify with the idea that we seek a core of constancy, of stability and familiarity in our lives and

experiences, and that our sense of identity depends upon the knowledge that we are the same person as we were, that there is a psychological as well as physical and bodily continuity in our experiences through time. Too much change and we would lose sight of ourselves altogether, lose our focal awareness while attending to the particulars, or even as a society as a whole we might fall into the irrational and destructive hyperactivity described by Toffler (1970), where change becomes a disease eventually leading to individual and social breakdown.

I was interested in understanding and exploring the different ways in which we change as individuals, what it means to us in terms of our own lives, and in exploring the relationship between the quality and extent of our changes and the quality of our experience of wholeness.

CHAPTER 3

ESTABLISHING A METHODOLOGY FOR EMPIRICAL INQUIRY

1. Introduction: Experiential learning and the implications of an existential-hermeneutic-phenomenological philosophy

These initial ideas about learning as an experiential, dialectical, personal process of understanding self and others through engagement in the contradictory activities of experiencing and thinking, in a context of interpersonal dialogue, provided the skeleton for a methodology of inquiry located firmly within an 'existential-hermeneutic-phenomenological' tradition - 'existential' in so far as inquiry was concerned with understanding the nature of individual personal human experience, especially those aspects concerned with our capacity to direct our lives through establishing our own meaning out of the conditions in which we live (Barrett, 1962:143), with our unqiue pattern of potentialities (May, 1961: 23/24), or possibilities (Abbagnano, 1971:276-300); 'phenomenological' in so far as experiencing and action are viewed as primary to reflection and conceptualisation, and the method of knowing is one which enables us to contact our experiences as we live them out in action, before any reflection 'about' them (Valle and King, 1978: 7; Merleau-Ponty, 1962: xv); and 'hermeneutic' in so far as the form of our knowing is dynamic and located in the context of time, where our experiences and preconceptions of the past are in a constant interpretative dialectic with our experiences in the present, and there is no absolute knowledge (Kockelmans, 1975), but only an interpretation that is the most reasonable in its particular context.

I should like to begin discussion of the methodology by outlining the key tenets of the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches, and their implications for the methods of inquiry, and especially those associated with the development of its 'validity', that is its worth

as a scientific endeavour - a concept that I initially accepted as being fundamentally associated with the 'correspondence' of the findings to the reality that they depict (Mitroff and Kilmann, 1978: 118); Heron, 1981a: 32)

1.1 Phenomenology and the perspective of Merleau-Ponty (1962; 1967)

I found Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology particularly appropriate in so far as his view is developed on the basis of a firm belief that we can learn and understand each other, and enshrines a philosophy of living through communication with others, and through participation in the world in which we live. The basic metaphysical framework complementing this belief is what Valle and King call the 'co-constitution' of subject and object (1978: 7-8). It is a view which in essence rejects the ideas that the objects of our thoughts exist in themselves and are prior to and determine our perceptions of them, or that they are alternatively determined by our own all-knowing and all-constituting thoughts. Instead, the view is adopted that knowing subject and known object co-exist in a dialectical interdependence, each essential to and constituting the other. The world is not what we think about says Merleau-Ponty (1962: xvii), but what we live through in a direct physical, perceptual relationship. It is accordingly the moment of our experiencing, of our total bodily contact with the world, the moment of initial perception, that is presumed to be the original and primary source of our knowing anything, prior to our subsequent reflections about it.

In this framework, we know our world and communicate with others through what Merleau-Ponty calls the 'significance' experienced in perception (1967: 199). We know something through the significance or meaning that it holds for us, a significance which is always simultaneously personal, from our own perspective or point of view, and general in so far as we know that its meaning may be shared by others, albeit from a different perspective. The fact that we know that others

can experience a similar meaning is the basis for our capacity for communication.

The phenomenological method is accordingly one which seeks to make contact with the meanings that we experience in our initial perceptions, and the chosen technique is that of a full and pure 'description', avoiding as far as possible any sort of conceptual analysis (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: viii-ix).

Mere, everyday, experiencing however is not adequate. The correlation of Merleau-Ponty's exhortation to pure description is that we normally find this difficult to do, and typically overlay our experiencing with many complex meanings. We need to find ways of distinguishing between meanings that obscure and the essential meaning or 'structure' of a phenomenon. It is a question, says Merleau-Ponty, of finding the relationship between significance and the absence of significance (1962: 428), finding by a process of clarification and reduction of inessentials, the "irreducible unity of meaning" which sums up the character of our experiential experience of a particular phenomenon (1967: 170). And although no structure is ever absolute, it may be characterised by its consistency, its ability to remain true through time (1962: 396).

The implications for the method are that it must also involve procedures for contacting our experiencing, for differentiating between significant and insignificant or less significant thoughts, and for describing our experiencing exactly as it is.

1.2 Hermeneutics and the perspectives of Kockelmans (1975) and Ihde (1971)

The hermeneutic perspective essentially complicates the phenomenological method by questioning the concept of the 'immediacy' of our experiencing (Ricoeur, 1971: xv), and by locating the dialectic of co-constitution in a dynamic context of feedback between present experiencing and past conceptions, personally and interpersonally.

Broadly speaking, the view of hermeneutics is that our understanding is always interpretative and influenced by our preconceptions, and by the views that we hold as a result of our cultural heritage and traditions. Knowing is viewed as a circular dialectic of preconceptions influencing, informing and yet only being made explicit in the light of new experiences in the present.

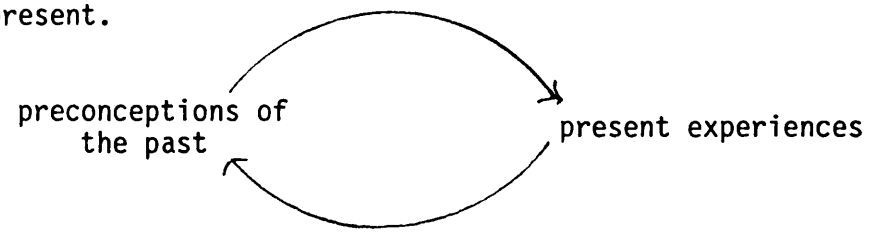


Figure 5

This is exemplified in the classical meaning of 'hermeneutics', which, according to Ihde (1971: 83) is a textual translation, a way of clarifying the obscure, and an exegesis revealing hidden meanings.

The method cannot be purely descriptive, but is always inherently dialogical and interpretative, translating and expressing pre-existing but previously unexpressed meanings.

The complications are that this immediately places the experiencing subject and the observer of the experiencing subject in a much more fallible position, with a greater propensity for error in perceptions of self or other, influenced by personal preconceptions to the extent that new experiencing is distorted or even ignored. If we do not question our interpretation, then it is likely that we are merely justifying our own preconceptions - a view in keeping with Bateson's observation (1973):

> "the living man is ... bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which - regardless of ultimate truth or falsity - become partially self-validating for him ... His ... beliefs about what sort of world it is will determine how he sees it and acts within it, and his ways of perceiving and acting will determine his beliefs about its nature." (p.285);

and with other theories of perception which stress our selectiveness and propensity for constancy, as do the theories of 'gestalt' perception, the Freudian theories of defence mechanisms (see pp.33-35 above), and

Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (1957).

The problem is how to enter into the hermeneutic circle in the right way, so that we do not let it make a circle with itself, making sense of the present only in terms of the past. The possibilities for error are endless in your interpretation of your experiencing, mine of mine, yours of mine, and mine of yours. The key is to use the potential of the circle to creative advantage, and to employ its inherent dialectic in the interests of validity, rather than in opposition to it.

Kockelmans identifies a number of 'canons' (1975: 83-86), which imply that key steps in the method for the researcher are exploring what a particular phenomenon means for him/her self; examining personal preconceptions; and permitting a constant engagement in the hermeneutic circle through inquiry, constantly checking out and differentiating between preconceptions and new meanings with each act of expression. The adjunct to this is to foster the autonomy and freedom of the observed actors to speak out to prevent the researcher's view being imposed without justification, the freedom to determine their own interpretation, to question and oppose that of the researcher-observer.

1.3 Summary: experiential learning and the implications of an existential-hermeneutic-phenomenological approach for the development of an epistemology and methodology

Together the ideas of existential-phenomenology and hermeneutics provide a foundation for enquiry into experiential learning, as a life-process of knowing in and for action, and for a participative experiential learning methodology which is grounded in concrete personal experience, and encircled by reflective procedures which can foster the understanding of self and other, and the development of a theory which is grounded in a shared reality, a shared world of meaning. The basic phenomenological view of 'co-constitution', is amplified to include hermeneutic

interpretative principles of feedback between individual and world. The method does not aim to seek an absolute essence or structure but to achieve a common bed of meaning, and inter-subjective agreement. It is a method in which 'truth' or 'reality' is essentially an inter-personal phenomenon located in a particular context, and where the procedures of inter-personal interaction, dialogue, participation, are the means of achieving 'truth', through the exploration and clarification of perceptions, individually and together, in distinguishing between valid and invalid perceptions between true perceptions and misconceptions, between significance and insignificance. The process of learning is a process of differentiation.

The hermeneutic circle of expression and interpretation is seen, not in opposition to the concept of co-constitution, but rather as an amplification of it. The dialogical procedures of the hermeneutic are precisely the sources of and guarantors of validity in our perceptions of the structures of the life-world, and the world of concrete pre-scientific experience. In communication and through conceptualisation, the reality experienced can be verified and the context of meaning can be made explicit. In a combined existential-hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, the total method must be one which incorporates (i) the examination of preconceptions, verifying the context of the present, (ii) immersion in experiencing and action, returning to or indeed progressing to unreflective experience, (iii) dialogue and communication facilitating the description, interpretation and reinterpretation of perceptions and their meanings, personally and in perceptions of another.

This was the implicit framework for the methodology that I adopted in seeking to understand and enable others to understand their experiences of development and change through life, and to develop a theory on the basis of a shared understanding and interpretation of their experiences,

to develop a shared reality of meaning, grounded in real life experience. My own particular task was to develop a detailed methodology in accordance with these principles to meet my practical and conceptual aims of inquiry - to develop practical choices for action; to enable individuals to explore and interpret their own experiences; and to develop a theory that was based upon a shared understanding and interpretation of individual experience, and was truly grounded in individual experience.

There were arising from this four main domains of inquiry to incorporate into the method, four areas of knowing to explore. These were the areas of

(i) my own preconceptions in setting out on enquiry

(ii) the immediate experiencing of participants and description of "what is happening now" in individual experience

(iii) the individual interpretation of experience, (a) in relation to the future and devleoping plans for action, and (b) in relation to past experiences and the development of a reflective interpretation of personal development as a life phenomenon, and

(iv) the consolidation of interpretations as a general theory.

I have explored the first of these domains in the preceding chapters. My aim in this chapter is to describe the process of the design of the empirical framework which I adopted to explore the latter domains, in the first of the practical projects of the inquiry.

Mitroff and Kilmann (1978: 119-121) note that different scientists with different characteristics and experiential preferences according to the Jungian typology (see pp.15-17 above) tend to emphasise different stages and aspects of method. The 'particular humanist' for example, a 'sensing/feeling' type, will normally be concerned with individual personal experience, the individual as a unique whole, and with the practical application of theory; while at the other pole, the 'conceptual

theorist', an 'intuitive-thinking' type will normally be concerned with the processes of conceptualisation and model making. They advocate an integrated approach, supporting a view that the ultimate quality of the validity of inquiry lies in the extent to which it can accommodate and integrate all aspects of the scientific process, from immersion in and the definition of actual experiencing through the processes of conceptualisation and trying out new ideas in practice.

This was an ideal that I adopted for my own inquiry, choosing a method which would aim to integrate concern for the individual and the world of personal experience with theory building and abstraction. The pages which follow tell the story of such an attempt.

2. Influences from the literature of research

In developing a detailed methodology of my own, there were two different primary sources that I turned to in existing literature. These were (i) the examples of co-operative and experiential methods developed by the practitioners of 'New Paradigm' research (Reason and Rowan (eds) 1981) and (ii) the models for theoretical 'discovery' developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967); Glaser (1978) and by Diesing (1972).

I shall first review the central ideas of these authors, subsequently identifying the aspects that I chose to incorporate into a personal methodology.

2.1 The co-operative, experiential methodologies of New Paradigm research

(Rowan, 1976a,1981; Reason, 1978; Heron, 1971, 1979a,1981a/b, 1982; and Torbert, 1972, 1977, 1978, 1981).

Although each begins from a different position, each of the above develops and describes a method in which an existential-hermeneutic-phenomenological approach is associated with a particular psychological model and beliefs about what helps and hinders our capacity to engage

in 'valid' knowing in empirical inquiry.

In all, a central assumption is the acceptance of the paradox that in inquiry day to day knowing is not adequate, and that it is up to the researcher to instigate and develop some kind of superior process of knowing; but that the researcher, in so doing, is no less fallible to the vagaries and pitfalls of everyday knowing, and to this extent on an equal footing with the participants in the research.

In this context, the only possible research strategy is that of co-operation and the development of a reciprocally helping relationship between researcher and researched, in which the dialogical procedures of hermeneutic understanding are geared towards enabling each other to explore, describe and interpret the essential meaning of experience, personally and intersubjectively.

The examples that I was influenced by are summarised as follows.

(i) Rowan's Dialectical Cycle (1976a, 1981)

Rowan's cycle through the stages of 'being', 'thinking', 'project', 'encounter', 'making sense', and 'communication' (see p.18 above) may represent the basic form of any kind of research inquiry, the author suggests. But in a fully co-operative methodology there are some important differences from the kind of inquiry in which the lone researcher goes out to collect some data and comes back and analyses it. The central difference is the extent to which researcher and researched engage in all stages together.

The basic philosophy underlying Rowan's model is that if inquiry is to be valid in the sense of 'correspondence', then it demands (i) the personal commitment and genuine involvement of the participants, (ii) the development of awareness of discrepancies, conflicts and contradictions in feelings on the part of all, and (iii) the further explor-

ation of these feelings and incorporation into inquiry.

His thesis is that traditional research tends to be 'alienating' in all senses of the word - whether in the Marxian sense of alienation of the worker from the product of his work, or in the existential sense of 'fragmentation', the experience of division from one's essential being. The research subject may be alienated from the end product of the research, feeling it bears no relation to his/her experience and having no control over the processes of its production; the researcher may feel alienated from what he/she is doing, finding that he/she is fulfilling an unnatural role; or feel alienated from the subject, or vice versa, appearing as if from Mars (1976a).

When alienation sets in, the conflicts and contradictions which lie at the heart of our experiencing and existential being are ignored and concealed. There can be no commitment and genuine inquiry into personal experience.

But in a dialectical methodology, with contact between researcher and researched at all stages of inquiry, the possibilities of alienation are greatly reduced, and, correspondingly, the quality of the validity of inquiry. Nor does 'validity' stop here. Rowan identifies a number of concerns which may be important to the researcher in defining the validity of inquiry. These are concerns about the 'efficiency', the 'political', the 'patriarchal', 'legitimacy' and 'relevance', the 'authenticity and alienation' and 'dialectical' issues, and they take the notion of validity far beyond the idea of achieving hard objective data. Validity is rather something defined by the individual and general meaning of the inquiry for the participants in the total social and personal context in which it takes place, and its practical use within this.

The kind of procedures which aid the process of valid inquiry are checklists of questions at every stage, addressed to the different con-

cerns identified. Of particular importance in a fully co-operative or dialectical inquiry are questions which seek to make the participants aware of their true feelings about what is happening and their involvement in the processes of experiencing and conceptualisation, and especially of any conflicting feelings and the feeling in inquiry of personal disconformation. The awareness, expression and inclusion of such feelings into the inquiry lies at the heart of the method.

(ii) Heron's experiential method (1971, 1979a, 1981a, 1981b, 1982)

In his earlier work (1971), Heron establishes a philosophical base and a broad outline of the essential conditions and procedures for an 'experiential' methodology. He argues for equal autonomy of researcher and researched on the grounds that the method must reflect the psychological source model of explanation adopted. If we see ourselves as self-directing agents, the method should reflect this in the means and ends of inquiry. One of the basic tenets of his own approach is that developed by Rogers in therapy (1967) - that a self-directing person develops most readily 'as a function of fully-reciprocal relations with other self-directing persons'. The reciprocally helping relationship, in which 'an individual explores his own behaviour and experience while attending fully to the experience of others' is the basic instrument and theatre of the research. Such a method requires the kind of conditions thought to be conducive to the development of reciprocal self-direction - such as risk-taking, trust, openness, self-disclosure, honesty, impartiality, self-acceptance, self-control and responsibility for oneself.

In the later development of the experiential method (1981a:19-35, 1981b: 153-166), these ideas are developed into a comprehensive methodology, theoretical or 'propositional' knowing through experiencing and action, where the participants embark in pairs on a series of operations which have parallels in the stages of Rowan's dialectical cycle.

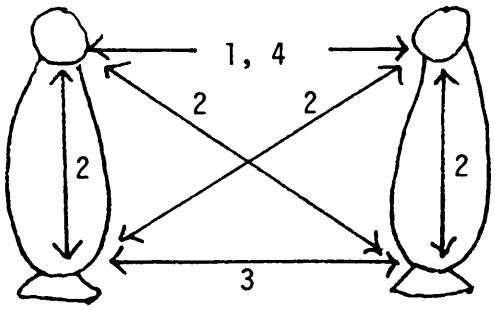


Figure 6 (Adapted from Fig. 12.4 in Heron, 1981b:157)

These are the stages of Fig. 6:

1. Agreement of hypotheses, phenomenal categories to map, procedures to follow (Being, thinking,)
2. Practice and application in action, with possible modification (project)
3. Immersion in mutual encounter, discriminating as far as possible what is actually happening (encounter)
4. Decision and formulation of conclusions, including the review of initial propositions, the evaluation of the impact of the procedures as a whole, and the formulation of new propositions (making sense, communication) (1981b:157-158)

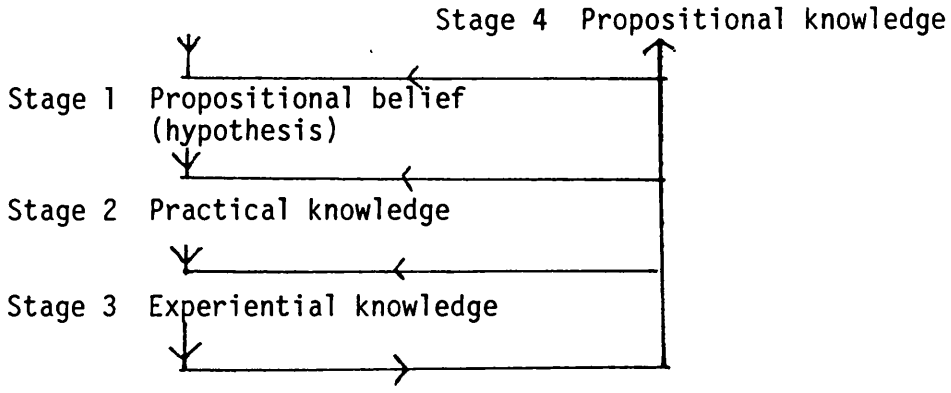


Figure 7 (Adapted from Fig. 12.6 in Heron, 1981b: 159)

The process as a whole (Fig. 7) involves a movement from propositional belief through practical knowledge to experiential knowledge, each successive stage informing the former. The method underlines and restates

the phenomenological view that no theoretical or reflective knowledge has any validity unless it rests in and is developed through experiential encounter; it adds to the basic paradigm the notion of 'practice', the essentiality of 'knowing how' to apply the experiential procedures of inquiry before embarking fully in encounter, either in encounter with one's own experiences and feelings, and/or in encounter with another.

The chief criteria of empirical validity of 'correspondence', is defined here (1982) as

> "the extent to which the statements that express the findings of the inquiry receive a supporting warrant from the experiences and actions of the co-subjects". (pp.1-2)

'Correspondence' however is not a simple matter of intersubjective agreement, suggests Heron, for this in turn depends upon the 'accuracy' of the findings, which is (1982)

> "entirely relative to what we choose to agree are appropriate tests or procedures for distinguishing the apparent from the real, the illusory from the veridical and to the sorts of skills and competencies we use in order to apply these tests." (p.2)

There are two primary threats to the phenomenological method in this context. These are unaware projection, and 'consensus collusion', where (1982)

> "we all tacitly agree to elicit the reality that is in fact a pseudo-relativity because we are all colluding in not noticing." (p.14)

The psychological model lying at the heart of Heron's method, containing the potential sources of these practical threats to validity, is a model which accepts the influence of childhood experiences and the influence of our defensive capacities for suppression and projection in distorting perceptions in the present. He writes (1982)

> "The theory here (in unaware projection) is that people in our sort of society carry around a good deal of unresolved distress - grief, fear, anger - from past experience, especially from the very beginnings of life and from childhood; and that there is a tendency for this to be projected out unawarely into all sorts of present situations, distorting

> perceptions of a situation and/or behaviour within it ... If as a child I used to express my real nature, my true self, and if this urge is repeatedly interrupted and interfered with I feel the distress of grief, fear and anger. If I am also constrained to suppress these valid distress feelings, then I am conditioned to become false to myself. In order to survive and get whatever conditional bit of support is available I learn to deny my real self, to deny the distress I feel at its interruption, and to erect a false and alienated self with which I identify.
>
> I then become addicted to projecting onto the world the anxiety of my denied distress, seeing the world as a negative, threatening place which therefore reinforces my addiction to my false and alienated self. I am stuck in the vicious circle of a compulsive, pathological need not to identify my real nature, nor what sort of world is really there in present time..." (pp.8-9)

Heron identifies a number of procedures, skills and competencies which are appropriate to meet these threats and are conducive to the development of empirical validity.

These include the procedures of checking out, of 'feedback' between experiencing and conceptualisation, personally, and interpersonally at a conceptual level, at an experiential level, and between one person's conceptualisation and another's experiencing; the notions of 'recycling' - going round the research cycle through experiencing and action a number of times to improve the accuracy of the developing propositions and concepts and to elaborate them; developing skills of 'noticing' and 'trying out', achieving a balance between them, and capacities such as 'emotional competence' which is defined as the ability to control unaware projections by controlling feelings and expressing them where appropriate, discharging emotions cathartically, perhaps through tears, knowing personal distress patterns and rigidities, the capacity for self-disclosure, and interpersonal skills of empathy, listening, confrontation to positive effect, participation and collaboration (1982: 16 ff).

The management of all of these aspects demands self-discipline, rigour, and the ability, says Heron (1981b) of

> "... keeping in mind a second order objective while fulfilling a first order objective". (p.164)

being able in other words to engage fully in experiencing, while retaining the capacity to always stand back and look at it in context.

The ideal method is one in which researcher and the traditional 'subject' adopt equal roles throughout, each participating equally in experiencing and conceptualisation as in the 'full blown model', but Heron also describes an 'intermediate model' (1979a:18-19), in which researcher and subject both contribute to propositional development, but the researcher facilitates rather than participates in the experiencing.

(iii) Reason's model for social praxis (1978)

> "Can individuals learn to reflect on the social and interpersonal situations of which they are a part, and on the basis of a new awareness learn to act more flexibly and creatively?" (p.1)

asks Reason.

His object is to develop a method for social 'praxis', defined as 'action which is informed by and based upon systematic exploration of and reflection on the situation in which it is to take place' (1978:7). It is a method which aims to combine the development of 'theory' which will help to guide the individual in his/her own particular situation, with 'illumination' on a wider scale. His prime interest, says Reason (1978:21-22), is to describe and understand unique situations so that participant researchers may act awarely in them, so that providing a 'thick' description may have the effect of holding up a mirror, in which other people may find illuminated their own reality.

While adopting the norms of the experiential/dialectical methods of researcher as actor, of the essentiality of agreement and the centrality of the quality of the data in determining its validity, Reason notes that the relationship between researcher and researched may develop from an initial role of researcher as facilitator to more equal roles in the course of inquiry; and recognises the need for the method to

accommodate a real differentiation between the here and now context of experiential inquiry and the life context outside, which is no less important. Questions raised are how the inquiry can be truly relevant to the participants, and the learning be transferred to the outside context - questions which are by and large omitted in any detail in the previous models described.

The methodology proposed follows the general sequence of the being, thinking, project, encounter, making sense and communication of the dialectical cycle, but takes the participants in and out of the contexts of inquiry and their own life situations, in stages as follows:

i. Introduction and contract setting (whole group)

ii. Introduction of propositions, plans (whole group)

iii. Data gathering in work (or life) situation

iv. Planning (whole group)

v. Action proper in work life situation

vi. Consolidation and review.

As well as the exercises involved in the development of action plans in stage iv., the method incorporates a number of workshop and experiential learning methods which help to develop self-awareness and clarity of purpose, bridging the gap between experiencing and reflection - such as life-planning exercises, mapping roles, personal scripts, psychodrama.

The question at the heart of the method, how the relevance of the inquiry to 'real life' outside it can be tested or reassured is however not explored in detail. It is treated in considerable depth by Torbert, the final practitioner of new paradigm research I would like to refer to.

(iv) Torbert's 'action science' (1972, 1977, 1978, 1981)

The question of the 'practical' validity of inquiry, the relevance of what takes place in it to the life issues it purports to be all about is Torbert's central interest. He writes (1981)

> "The ultimate criterion of whether a given action is aesthetically appropriate, politically timely and analytically valid is whether it yields increasingly valid data about issues increasingly significant to the effectiveness (including) ... the issues of what constitutes effectiveness for any given acting-system" (p.148)

Torbert's own definitions of 'effectiveness' include 'outcomes congruent with purposes' (1977, Appendix), and is associated with the congruency of experiences and beliefs, and the acceptance of the significance of emotions and willingness to develop new behavioural patterns and responses recognising them . (1972).

One of the central arguments of Torbert's approach is that we do not as a rule act in a manner that is congruent with our words, experiences and emotions, and that our commitment to learning to change, to authentic participation, which is the backbone of the previous approaches described, cannot be taken for granted. Where Heron speaks of the negative influences of unresolved childhood distress in distorting our awareness and interpretations of experience, Torbert adopts the 'mystery-mastery' theory coined by Bakan (1967), which suggests that our need for psychological success and personal confirmation, if challenged, will produce a resistance to awareness, to producing valid information and actually carrying out effective changes. In the 'mystery mastery' theory, we are seen to be drawn into a social process which enforces a self-perpetuating dichotomy between the personal world of experience and social and public life (Torbert, 1978; 1972). Public and social life with its rational norms is seen to discourage the sharing of personal feelings, which in turn fosters a defensive fear of revealing self in public, a wish not to influence or be influenced openly by others, a fear of exposing one's own lack of purpose, a fear of looking foolish if the unknown is explored (1978: 111).

This means that we not only develop a 'fundamentally inaccurate self-image' (1972: 27), in which we think that we are successful, and

autonomous, but we resist any feedback which will conflict with this image, and so never know any better.

The consequences of this for any kind of learning and development are disastrous. Torbert refers to the findings of the organisational interventionists such as Argyris and Schon (1974), or Argyris (1971), who note the difficulties of achieving congruency in organisations between theory and practice, between the 'espoused' theory and the 'theory in use', a discrepancy which, it is suggested, is fostered by the researcher who adopts a 'unilateral control' approach, reducing his client to an inferior status and fostering the negative defensive patterns which preclude learning.

The method for research, for the interventionists, will not be effective unless the questions are tackled of how the personal commitment to learning and to the choices made can be developed, and how valid information that is congruent with personal feelings and purposes can be obtained.

Again, the answer lies in a collaborative approach, and the development of a relationship of trust and shared purpose between researcher and researched. But even such an approach, suggests Torbert, will not be effective unless as individual participants we really do learn to recognise and observe our 'inner states' and 'consciously appropriate' them (1972).

The general objective is to develop a particular kind of attention which embraces 'the outside world', 'one's own behaviour' and 'one's own thought and feelings', integrated by 'intuitive and intentional consciousness' which has the potential for 'inter penetrating vivifying and providing purpose' for all dimensions - in other words, which can recognise and achieve congruency between different aspects of experiencing, and increasingly yield valid information which is significant to increasing effectiveness, and will achieve the integration of personal

purposes with exterior goals. A conscious system will recognise the need for feedback and encourage conditions encouraging mutual sharing, experience that can transform conscious purpose, and a pre-disposition to self-control, says Torbert (1972).

As a method for experiential learning and personal development (1972) the object is to enable those who have internalised the mystery-mastery attitude to break through into higher levels of consciousness and reorganise the lower levels. Incorporated into a traditional teaching programme (1978), Torbert describes the theory and practice of a 'liberating structure' in which students are requested to examine the conflicts and incongruities of their own experiences while completing their answers to the set project question, "How to operate with administrative effectiveness". Special 'learning papers' are designed to 'force' (1978: 116) the students to be free by opening their eyes to the conflicts and leading them towards a changed view of reality and what effectiveness constitutes.

Incorporated into a method for research inquiry (1977, 1981), the questions are how research can influence the system studied, and in a way that does not distort what is there, and that does not allow researcher and researched to succumb to mystery-mastery. The main conditions proposed are an experiential self-study on the part of all concerned which demands (1981)

> "valid knowledge about the acting systems own purposes and valid knowledge about the interplay between actor and outside world as well ... knowledge that directly affects purposes and practices ... intuitive and sensual knowledge ... about what is worthy of attention in the first place ... about how to direct attention ... sensual knowledge of posture and gaze at any given moment..." (pp.145-146)

together with

> "interpenetrating attention, sensual awareness and supple behaviour ... symbolic, ironic, diabolic thinking and feeling ... action" (pp.148-149)

As a whole, Torbert's method of 'action science' or 'scientific intro-

spectionism' adds to the basic paradigm the notions that the only effective way of obtaining knowledge for action, is knowledge about action, and in the context of the action in inquiry itself. It is the failure to uncover and explore the complexities of personal experience in the immediate present that precludes the transfer of learning into action that is related to significant purposes. The keystone of inquiry, as for Heron, Reason and Rowan, is the attention to dimensions of personal experience through systematic techniques of awareness.

(v) Summary of new paradigm methodologies

All of the models described show different forms of the experiential learning dialectics between concrete experiencing and abstract conceptualisation, reflection and action,as a method for research. The models described amplify our understanding of the phenomenological paradox that subjective experiencing is the route to validity but that day to day awareness is inadequate. Heron's method adopts the psychodynamic perspective that the experiences and unresolved distress of our childhood may occlude perception and understanding in the present context; Torbert adopts the mystery-mastery theory as the central negative process.

An important distinction is made between different possible kinds of validity -

(i) 'ethical validity (Heron, 1982), 'political', 'patriarchal', 'legitimate' categories (Rowan, 1981) are all one kind, associated with the social context and relevance of the inquiry; while

(ii) 'conceptual' validity (Heron, 1982), 'analytic' validity (Torbert, 1981), 'efficiency' (Rowan, 1981) are all associated with the techniques and methods of data collection and analysis, and with the conceptual quality of the theory, and

(iii) 'practical' and 'experiential' validity are a third kind associated with the correspondence and congruence of all

> dimensions of experiential learning, the match between 'what is', and how this relates to interpretation of it conceptually and in action.

The two fundamental characteristics associated with validity in new paradigm research are (1) the relation between and interdependence of empirical and practical validity, and (2) the belief that all other forms of validity derive from and are dependent upon the experiential quality of empirical validity. There is little point in developing a perfectly coherent and clear theory if the information upon which it is based is unsound.

Founded upon the phenomenological philosophy of the essential unity of reflection and action, the methodologies adopt the general stance that 'valid' perceptions, perceptions which get to the heart of our own and others' experiencing, to the heart of the meaning that we experience in our thoughts and feelings, are those which are developed in action and dialogue; and are known because of the indisputability of their fact in action, and because of their relevance to personal purposes and projected action in the future. A phenomenon which is only a figment of thought, something 'thought about' rather than actively experienced, has little existential meaning, and consequently little validity.

Reason and Rowan point out that validity in new paradigm research is more 'personal and interpersonal' than procedural, concerned with technical procedures for measurement (1981b:239-250). It depends as much upon the skills and quality of participation of those taking part as upon anything the participants might be asked to and agree to undertake. The essential qualities are those of discriminating what is actually there, and the capacity of the inquiry as a whole to actually bring about the changes in practice that it purports to be bringing about - in other words, the capacity for self-evaluation.

The implications for the method are that it must also be a method for personal development, which enables individuals to develop the quality of their experiencing and awareness, in order to resolve the potential and actual errors and confusions in our day to day perceptions and understanding of ourselves and others.

Rowan and Reason elsewhere (1981a:113-137) note the parallels between this and the Hegelian 'levels' of consciousness, in which the object is to progress through the 'primary' level, of naive feelings and perceptions, through the secondary 'social level' associated with rational thought and the objective control of feelings, to the 'realised level', achieved only through 're-accepting and rescuing material from the primary level' (1981a:123).

The essential conditions for inquiry in order to achieve this are those of co-operation, and mutual support; a relationship and roles of parity between researcher and researched with respect for the capacities of the researched; an ideological commitment to the need to learn, to the achievement of something that has yet to be developed in practice; a high potential for the development of the skills required; inquiry in a context of action.

The essential procedures to be incorporated into the method are procedures for uncovering the errors and obscurities in perception and understanding; for noticing, accepting and acting upon personal conflicts and incongruities, in a context of dialogue and feedback.

2.2 Theoretical approaches to 'Discovery'

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; and Diesing, 1972).

In contrast to the stress which is laid on experiential validity by the new paradigm practitioners and the emphasis on inquiry as an active process of personal development for all concerned, the theoretical approaches of these authors assume as their objective the development of a theory that may in some way 'explain' and give understanding of

those whom it describes - as Glaser (1978) writes,

> "... a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved". (p.93)

The emphasis lies less on the uncovering of conflicts and incongruencies in perceptions than on the collection and analysis of data by the lone researcher, so that the theory will have the fullest possible and most accurate application to the experiences and behaviours of those observed. 'Validity' is concerned primarily with the conceptual qualities of the theory (though is combined with experiential concerns in Diesing's approach).

The two different approaches of Glaser and Strauss and Diesing are summarised as follows.

(i) The grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967, 1978)

Developed on the assumption that there is a unity in the social world accessible through conceptual analysis, Glaser and Strauss describe a method of theoretical development in which the objective is to 'discover' a theory which is valid by virtue of the qualities of 'logical consistency, clarity, parsimony, scope and integration' as well as its 'fit' and 'ability to work' (1967: 5), that is its ability to predict and explain.

Validity lies in the quality and extent of the conceptual and practical relevance of the theory to the field studied, and in its sophistication in combining the greatest possible scope of application with the fewest possible concepts.

The method of discovery follows a process in which the researcher first chooses a particular phenomenon or substantive area to study, and begins by collecting information and then 'comparing incidents' from the data to establish conceptual similarities. Further sources of data appropriate to the phenomenon are chosen to 'saturate' the concepts as far as possible, until no new conceptual categories emerge

(1967: 61). This is followed by the steps of integration, of identifying 'core categories' (1978: 102), 'coding families' (1978: 72) at a higher level of abstraction and of more general application, which are drawn into hypotheses and eventually into a theory. The theory is complete, when (1978)

> "it explains with the fewest possible concepts and the greatest possible scope as much variation as possible in the behaviour and problems under study" (p.125)

Throughout the process the researcher is advised to be guided in his choice of data and comparisons by the demands of the emerging theory, and to draw upon data from any relevant field.

(ii) The holistic approach of Diesing (1972)

Like the grounded theory approach, the holistic method is based on the assumption of a unity in the social world, and follows a process of conceptual analysis through comparison and the establishment of 'themes', the integration of themes in 'case studies' and the development of 'typologies' of case studies which are finally integrated into a general theory. A theory, says Diesing, explains individual types by stating the connections that link its elements, showing what clusters or themes are significant for the type, and explains the typologies by ordering them in some way.

But in the holistic approach there are a number of important differences. The implicit philosophy is dialectical, and explanation is geared to understanding human systems as unique wholes in themselves and as part of a wider whole. Meaning is found in the relations of a part to others. The researcher is advised to be guided by and to employ only the concepts which exist in the data rather than by the demands of the theory for elegance. The theory is 'concatenated', developed as a pattern model, and showing the directly observable connections between parts. The researcher is advised to look for the missing connections, and to add to the pattern as the field demands.

The dialectic is also recognised between researcher and researched, with the attendant capacity of the researcher to distort the data. Diesing identifies his own kind of empirical validity, 'contextual' validity, which demands that a particular piece of information is placed in the context of others' interpretations of the same piece, so that the researcher's view is validated by the participants. The researcher is advised to keep an account of why and how he has acted as he has done, and to incorporate this into the findings.

2.3 Review of literary sources: critique and identification of a personal model for empirical inquiry

Referring to my own objectives, it was evident that neither of the two different approaches were adequate on their own to meet my interests in engaging in an experiential inquiry which would permit individuals to explore their own experiences, and to also develop a general theory.

The co-operative methodologies were helpful in giving guidance in relation to the experiential inquiry and in defining the conditions conducive to the achievement of empirical validity, but gave little guidance on how co-operative inquiry might incorporate the development of a general theory, co-operatively involving all points of view. Although Reason and Rowan (1981b:249) and Heron (1981a:31) both point out the essentiality of reflection and conceptualisation, I found it easier to envisage how the models might be applied to developing some fairly general proposals about the nature of specific personal and interpersonal experiences in the context of inquiry itself, than to developing a comprehensive theory accounting for the experiences of all who take part - and experiences which in my own case would be for the most part memories reconstructing and recreating the past. The question of how a general theory can be developed co-operatively is not considered in any great detail. The problem of how to get from the concepts describing and illuminating

individual experience to the concepts describing and illuminating the combined experiences of all participants is still apparent.

At the same time, I found that while the 'grounded theory' approach offered some useful guidance on the development of theory through a constant comparative method, the philosophy of the model conflicted in many ways with my interest in understanding the experiences of individuals from their points of view, with the demand for empirical 'correspondence', and indeed with my own values ofequality and democracy.

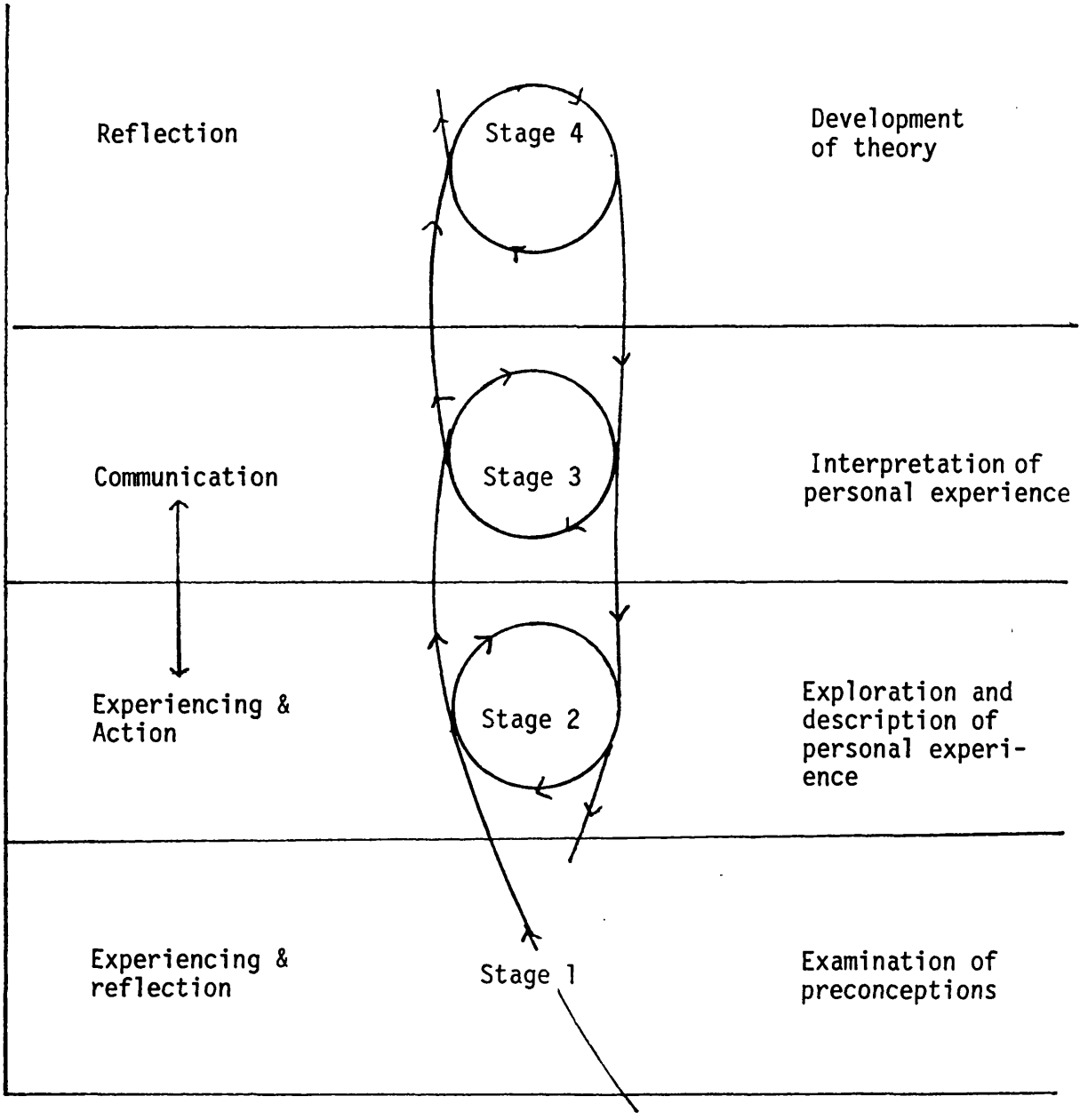
The approach was contradictory in itself, arguing that there is a unity in the social world, but employing a unilateral approach to find it, locating its discovery firmly in the hands of the lone and unchallenged researcher. How could such an approach develop a theory which 'fits' anything other than the researcher's own preconceptions, and how could the researcher avoid seeking new sources of data which would confirm his own views without confrontation? A piecemeal sampling from different sources only seemed to compound the problem, and the approach contained an implicit although unexplored belief in the infallibility of language and the written word, as 'data', to convey one absolute and indisputable meaning.

I decided generally that only an approach which adopted the primacy of experiential validity, and a philosophy of equality and free collaboration, would be appropriate to my interests and values and to the dialectical philosophy of experiential learning previously described. I decided to develop a method incorporating my own version of a co-operative method with theoretical development along the lines of the holistic method, proceeding through the development of case studies and typologies to a general theory.

The important questions that I needed to answer were

i. What was to be the form of my own experiential research cycle?

ii. What conditions and procedures were to be adopted in the inter-



The basic experiential cycle

Figure 8

Designing a methodology

ests of empirical validity?

iii. What was to be my own role, and what that of the participants?

iv. Exactly what would we do to collect the information?

v. How could we integrate conceptual development and concerns for conceptual validity into the method?

It was through answering these questions that the model began to take shape.

3. An experiential model for empirical inquiry - my own design

3.1 The basic experiential cycle (Figure 8)

Both Heron and Rowan's models show the experiential cycle as if it were self-contained, situated only in the context of the inquiry. In theory and in practice though, it is located in the wider context of each participant's personal experience, and according to the canon's of hermeneutic inquiry, begins with the examination of existing pre-conceptions. I preferred to take the basic cycle as one which begins and ends in the personal life and experience of the researcher, and to see the inquiry as a distinct section or cycle within this.

Rowan's and Heron's model implies that there is a distinct time for 'thinking' or for 'encounter', but in the practice of repeated cycles the distinction must become less one of a distinction between elements of experiencing, than between the cycles themselves. There were four possible distinct cycles or stages in my own inquiry, determined by my epistemological aims:

i. the cycle/stage associated with the examination of pre-conceptions, prior to empirical inquiry,

ii. the cycle/stage associated with the exploration of personal experience, and the development of full, individual descriptions

iii. the cycle/stage associated with the development of inter-

pretations of individual personal experience, fulfilling the joint role of providing choice for individual future action, and of providing the base of intersubjective agreement for the further development of theory

iv. the development of theory.

Although reflection and action, conceptualisation and experiencing, being, thinking, project, encounter, making sense and communication might all be involved in any stage, I saw the first stage as one of personal experiencing and reflection, the second and third as the primary stages for experiencing, action and communication, the 'action' part of the research, and the fourth stage as a purely reflective stage.

3.2 Conditions and procedures for empirical validity

Considering these questions more closely, it was evident that they would be related to the question of our roles in inquiry, in so far as I accepted the view that the more equal the participation of researcher and researched, the greater the opportunity for uncovering distortions on both parts.

But in deciding what to adopt of the conditions and procedures advocated in the new paradigm models, there were two inter-related questions to consider: (i) the logic of the philosophy and psychology underlying the new paradigm model, their quality as 'ideal' models, and (ii) on a more practical note, to what extent I could realistically adopt them in my own inquiry, given my own aims and interests.

Further thought on these issues revealed a number of conflicts, which in their resolution, led to the development of my own modified 'new paradigm' model. These were the problems as follows.

(i) Validity and the problems of the interdependence of co-operation, parity in roles, and personal development

In the ideal method, equality and parity of roles between researcher and the traditional 'subject', shared agreement about the purpose and

nature of the activities of inquiry, a commitment to personal learning and development and to overcoming the resistances and defences which may distort perceptions of self and others are all integral elements which contribute to the empirical validity of inquiry. To this extent, the achievement of validity rests on the establishment of a context where a number of people who, although potentially defensive, understand their need to learn and to overcome these defences, and share and accept the same psychological model that learning comes through the development of awareness of personal conflicts and contradictions; and who are committed to helping each other to do the same.

But what happens if the participants do not all accept this model - how can it then be fully co-operative? There is always the risk that he/she who has potentially the most to learn, is the most defensive and the most prone to distorted perceptions will not accept their need to learn in the first place. Does this necessarily exclude them from inquiry?

One way out of this problem is to work with a group of people who are familiar with the philosophy and methods of personal development, to minimise the risk of disagreement and unco-operation. But this carries with it the risk that familiarity might bring with it a defensive strategy which is simply that of a more sophisticated order, a yet more elaborate 'mystery-mastery' strategy where fore-knowledge of the rules may strengthen the capacity to sustain a masterful and distorted image of self and the world, and lead to a kind of 'in-game' which is no more valid as a method which seeks to probe the surface of day to day perceptions, and which tends to self-rationalisation rather than creative inquiry.

I wanted to develop a method which could take research into the lives of ordinary people, who were not necessarily familiar with the models of psychology, and where agreement could not be presupposed;

where, although the object is to reach the 'realised' level of awareness (see p.60 above), there may be wide variations in individual capacities for and indeed personal definitions of, personal learning and development. The problem was to establish rules and guidelines for the achievement of validity with which the inquiry would not hang itself, to establish rules which were to be the guardians of 'science' but at the same time humanly realistic, and non-exclusive.

The first problem for inquiry would be that of integrating different 'levels' of personal learning within a broadly co-operative framework and general conditions for the achievement of empirical validity. This pointed to an important modification for my own role - for although ideally an equal participant, it would inevitably be that of 'co-ordinator' and, to the extent that the inquiry began with my own individual and personal interests in undertaking a research thesis, it would also be that of 'initiator'.

If individual differences were to be respected, if inquiry was to be open to 'lay' participation, if my own initiating role was to be recognised, then we would need in inquiry to find our own way towards validity, accepting the possibility of imparity, although working within the assumptions that 'valid' knowledge is something that lies in part beneath the surface of our everyday assumptions, that we need to employ methods which enable us to recover suppressed or repressed experiences that are important to us and to practise and develop a new quality of self-awareness and a change in the state of our perceptions and understanding. I accepted the view that our perceptions of others may well be distorted and that any claim on my part to describe, understand and interpret another's experiences must be verified and at least fed back to the other for comment if it is to have any 'correspondent' validity at all as being representative of their own perceptions. I accepted that the climate of inquiry must be one of mutual trust and a high degree

of commitment to taking part in it, and that the method should aim to uncover personal incongruencies which distort perceptions in all who take part - but that there may at the same time be different degrees in our needs and abilities to do this individually.

(ii) Validity and the problem of demands

A second issue related in part to the first was the problem of the demands of implementing an experiential co-operative inquiry, both in terms of time and energy. One way round the problem of individual differences is to engage in fairly lengthy procedures for developing the high quality awareness required to meet the ideals of the new paradigm models, to spend a lot of time 'practising', and developing the attitude of self-discovery and openness so essential to the uncovering of personal incongruencies and defensive perceptions. In Heron's model this is combined with fairly complex though systematic corrective feedback loops throughout the learning cycle, for checking and intrapersonally and interpersonally the correspondence between concepts and experiencing in self perceptions and perceptions of the other, engaging with the other in experiential encounter and in reflection (see p.52 above). In Rowan's model, it may be combined with the systematic use of checklists of questions at each stage of the research cycle (see p.18 above). The potential for complexity is increased by the possibility of going round the basic cycle, in whichever form one has chosen, many times to increase the quality and empirical validity of the resulting concepts and propositions.

Applying these ideas to my own aims and interests, to an inquiry in which considerable time would be spent in simply building up a climate of trust and co-operation, and in which I also wanted to develop a general theory and would be required to demonstrate conceptual and linguistic skills adequate to a doctoral thesis seemed a tall order. Experiential research opened up a limitless field to tax the skills of the researcher

(and the participants) - skills of facilitation, of communication and understanding, of contact with one's own personal experience and that of others, of conceptualisation and simple 'time management' on one's own part and the part of others.

I decided to adopt an approach in which I felt fairly confident of being able to manage all these aspects, which was demanding but not over-ambitious, and which I felt that participants without any previous experience of this kind would be receptive to, and would find stimulating but not alienating through simply being too demanding and incomprehensible.

Accepting the primacy of the condition that the inquiry should be non-alienating before learning was possible, I decided to begin with a simple design in which exercises in the development of self-awareness might be incorporated, and in which feedback was formally confined to the feedback to participants of written descriptions and interpretations. The inquiry was to be an inquiry into the philosophy and practicality of the new paradigm methodology, and if all went well there was always scope to proceed from the simple to the more complex.

(iii) The problems of responsibility and sensitivity

There was a problem here which was fuelled by my own preconceptions and past experiences of participating in groups, and as a training officer.

I had always been conscious of the 'power' which the facilitator has to place the participants in situations which may be of his but not of their own choosing, and had on occasion witnessed genuine distress on the part of participants which was needlessly caused and to no constructive purpose by the blind pursuit by the facilitator of his own personal aims. I was aware that I was not a trained therapist and that if I were to encourage participants to engage in the kind of discoveries which were distressful, I would need to accept some responsi-

bility for this and be sure of my abilities to help the participants to turn this to constructive and positive ends. I felt that the self-awareness so much stressed by the new paradigm methodologies must not obliterate awareness of and sensitivity to the needs of others, and decided to adopt a process of gentle negotiation, encouraging participants to look into their experiences as much as they were able and wanted to, but by no means adopting a strategy of 'forcing' the students to be free, as Torbert advocates (1978), albeit ironically.

(iv) Criteria and conditions of validity: summary of choices

From the range of specific kinds of validity proposed in the new paradigm methodologies, I accepted the following and propose a categorisation as follows :

(1) Social validity

Inquiry should be socially relevant, in the senses of

a. relevance to contemporary social issues and interests
b. developing the social applications and scope of research and its methodology, taking it to a wider audience
c. upholding and promoting values of self-help, caring and co-operation
d. representing and furthering democracy, personal freedom and respect for all people as equally human beings.

(2) Experiential validity

These are the criteria associated with the issues of correspondence of the findings to the empirical reality that it represents, in individual experience and in intersubjective understanding. Inquiry should achieve correspondence between

a. the experiential content of an experience and personal perceptions of it
b. personal perceptions and a second order interpretation of meaning
c. in the development of a shared, intersubjective understanding, correspondence between personal perceptions and interpretation

of meaning and the other's perception and interpretation of the same phenomenon

d. in writing theory, correspondence between the final object and the experiences it represents

e. giving positive illumination and choices for action to its individual participants and to a wider readership. This includes the researcher/facilitator, something which is easy to forget. Although an aspect of social validity, in the dialectical experiential paradigm this cannot be divorced from and is interdependent with the achievement of perceptual correspondence.

I accepted Heron's view that conceptual validity is dependent upon the achievement of experiential empirical validity, and Rowan and Reason's view that empirical validity is largely personal and interpersonal, relying on personal abilities as much as technical procedures. But there were ways of fostering, and testing, empirical validity to be included in the method.

These were (Fig. 9)

a. To feed back any written work of my own to participants, for confirmation, amendment or rejection - either in the production of descriptions or interpretations

b. To develop a climate facilitating trust and confrontation

c. To incorporate into inquiry experiential exercises designed to give practice in skills of awareness, and to focus on personal conflicts

d. To develop my own personal account along with the other participants, to take as much part as possible in the entire process

e. To develop conditions facilitating the commitment and authentic and autonomous participation of all.

I accepted that the ultimate test of empirical validity, of whether inquiry had penetrated, clarified and expressed the existential essence or phenomenological 'structure' of experience would be the quality of

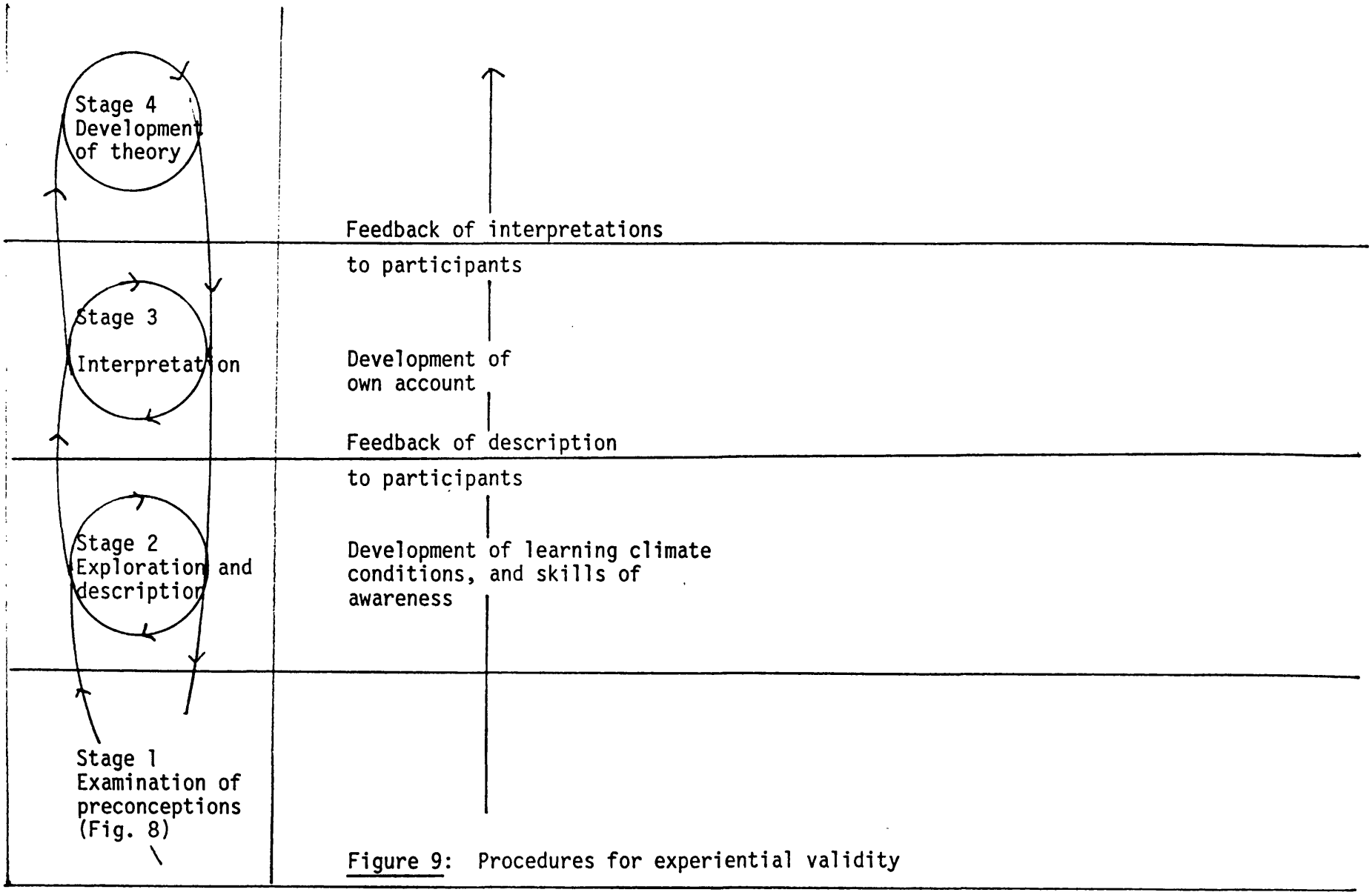


Figure 9: Procedures for experiential validity

the meaning of inquiry for its individual participants; and the test of whether this was a universal essence with relevance to a wider audience would lie in the quality of the meaning that the inquiry conveys to the reader.

3.3 Our respective roles

As far as the questions of co-operation and equality were concerned, I accepted that the fourth stage as well as the first would be primarily personal, and that the inquiry would certainly be rooted in my own individual life-cycle and interests - or at least, that the writing-up would be set in the context of my own perspective, although the participants would also take part in the context of their own personal preconceptions and personal summings up. I anticipated that co-operation and contact with each other would be primarily facilitated in the second and third 'action' and 'communication' stages/cycles, and that as such the method would be a closer approximation to Heron's intermediate, experiential model (see p.53 above), and would show contact in the middle stages of Rowan's dialectical cycle (see p.47 above) rather than take the form of a fully co-operative inquiry.

Within the stages of contact I aimed to facilitate as equal a participation as possible of myself and the other participants, although recognising that I would inevitably take on the role of facilitator and co-ordinator as well as that of participant.

3.4 Methods and procedures for the collection of information

The next problem was to consider exactly what methods and procedures to employ in the stages of empirical inquiry and theoretical development, for the collection of information (Fig. 10).

In the second stage I chose to follow Reason's general model for inquiry through experiential and participative workshops incorporating a range of experiential exercises. I rejected the idea that interviews on their own might be adequate for experiential inquiry, even on the

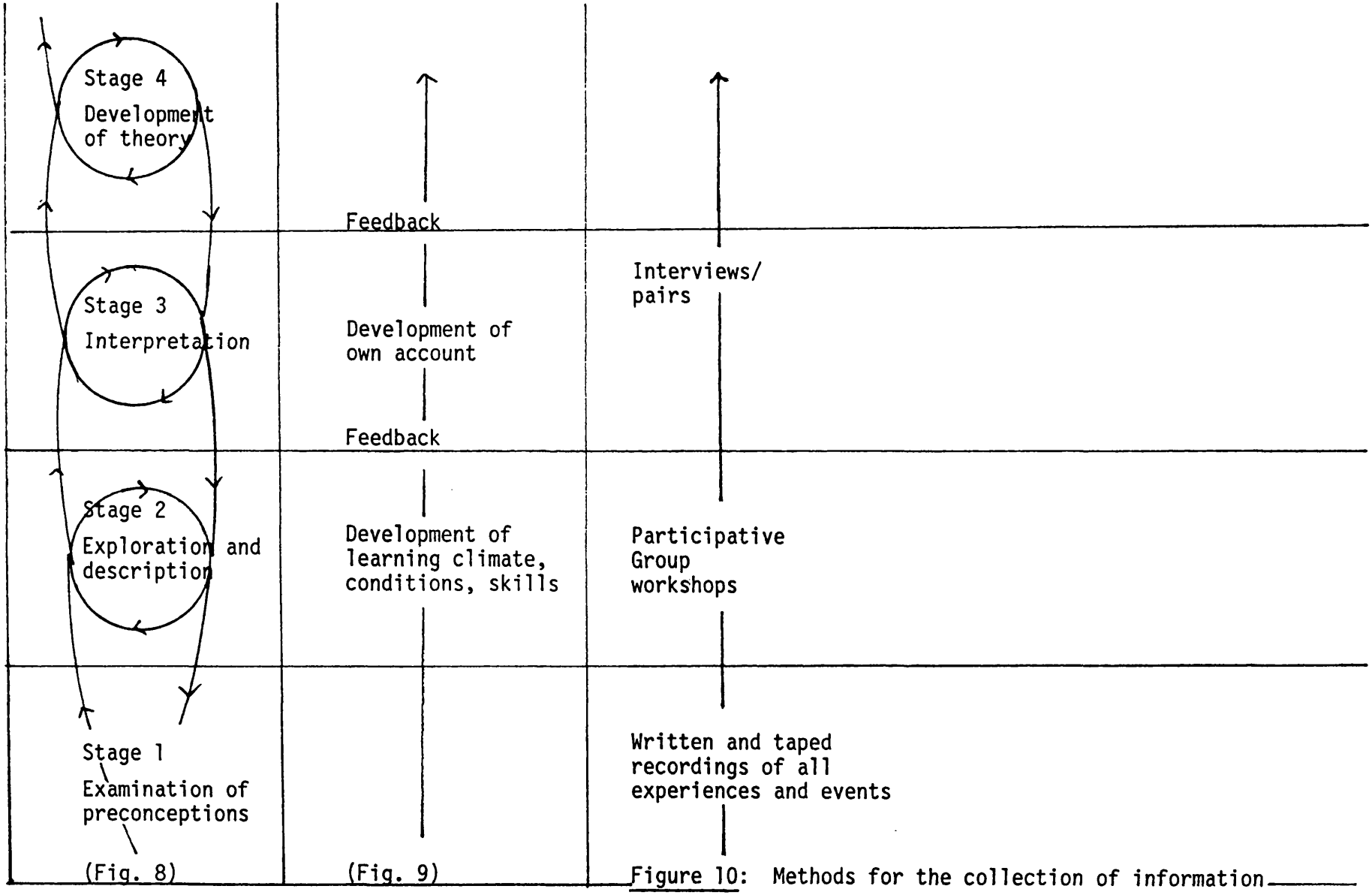


Figure 10: Methods for the collection of information

dyadic base described by Heron. In 'interviews', the opportunity for the researcher to determine the course of inquiry and to reject confrontation with his/her own perceptions may be greater. The scope for participants to learn and develop through inquiry, and the kind of presentational skills that can be employed, are limited more or less to one-to-one dialogue. The only 'view' or perspective of each individual is that apparent in the particular and single relationship with the researcher. The multiple perspectives developed through the many possible combinations of relationships and activities in a group workshop, however, would be invaluable in the development of full and accurate understanding of individual persons and their experiences,in the development of 'contextual' validity (see p.63 above), and in accordance with Bateson's view (1980: 77-100) that discovery emerges through multiple comparison. It would also permit the most efficient use of time and resources, combined with Torbert's suggestion (1978; 1981: 149) of recording, on tape or paper, every event and experience of the empirical inquiry. What it might take three or four individual interviews to achieve might be achieved in a group exercise lasting an hour or so.

Although it would have been impossible to undertake the inquiry anyway through 'participant observation' methods, unless I was able to live with the participants over a period of time, this alternative method suffers from similar limitations as that of the interview method, unless designed to include procedures for feedback, for reducing the possibility of alienation, for developing personal potential for experiencing.

In undertaking the detailed design of the workshops, I adopted the broad framework outlined by Tobert (1977; 1978) and Reason (1978) following a sequence of

i. Contract setting and agreement about procedures to follow, roles, and the criteria for inquiry

ii. Structured exercises in experiential exploration and personal development, interspersed with

iii. Periods for reflection/application in everyday life context

iv. Gathering of information into a detailed individual description of each participant.

Although an 'unstructured' approach, such as the 'encounter' or 'T' group methods described by Rogers (1973) or Schutz (1973) might have the advantage of precipitating individual personal development I was not confident or experienced enough in using completely unstructured methods as the basis of inquiry, when I set out on the research. There would also be the added problem of the relation of the outcome to my conceptual aims and interests, and of integrating the experiencing in encounter with the reflective methods necessary for interpretation and the development of autobiographies. I decided to prepare a number of exercises which, with the agreement of participants, might be used as the springboard for experiential and conceptual development, on as broad a basis as possible. In planning these provisional programmes for inquiry I was influenced by the kind of therapeutic self-development and gestalt methods proposed for example by Stevens (1971); Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1974); Fadiman and Frager (1976); Assagioli (1975); Ernst and Goodison (1981); Herman and Korenich (1977); Pfeiffer and Jones (1974; 1975; 1977; 1979); by the methods of co-counselling (Evison and Horobin, 1981; Heron 1979b; Southgate and Randall, 1978); and by the particular concepts that I accepted as fundamental to a theory of personal development (see pp.84-88 following).

In the third stage, the development of interpretations of individual experience, I planned to conduct interviews on a one-to-one basis with each participant. This was essential to the development of my own understanding of participants, all of whom I would not necessarily encounter in the group exercises; and essential to the verification or rejection

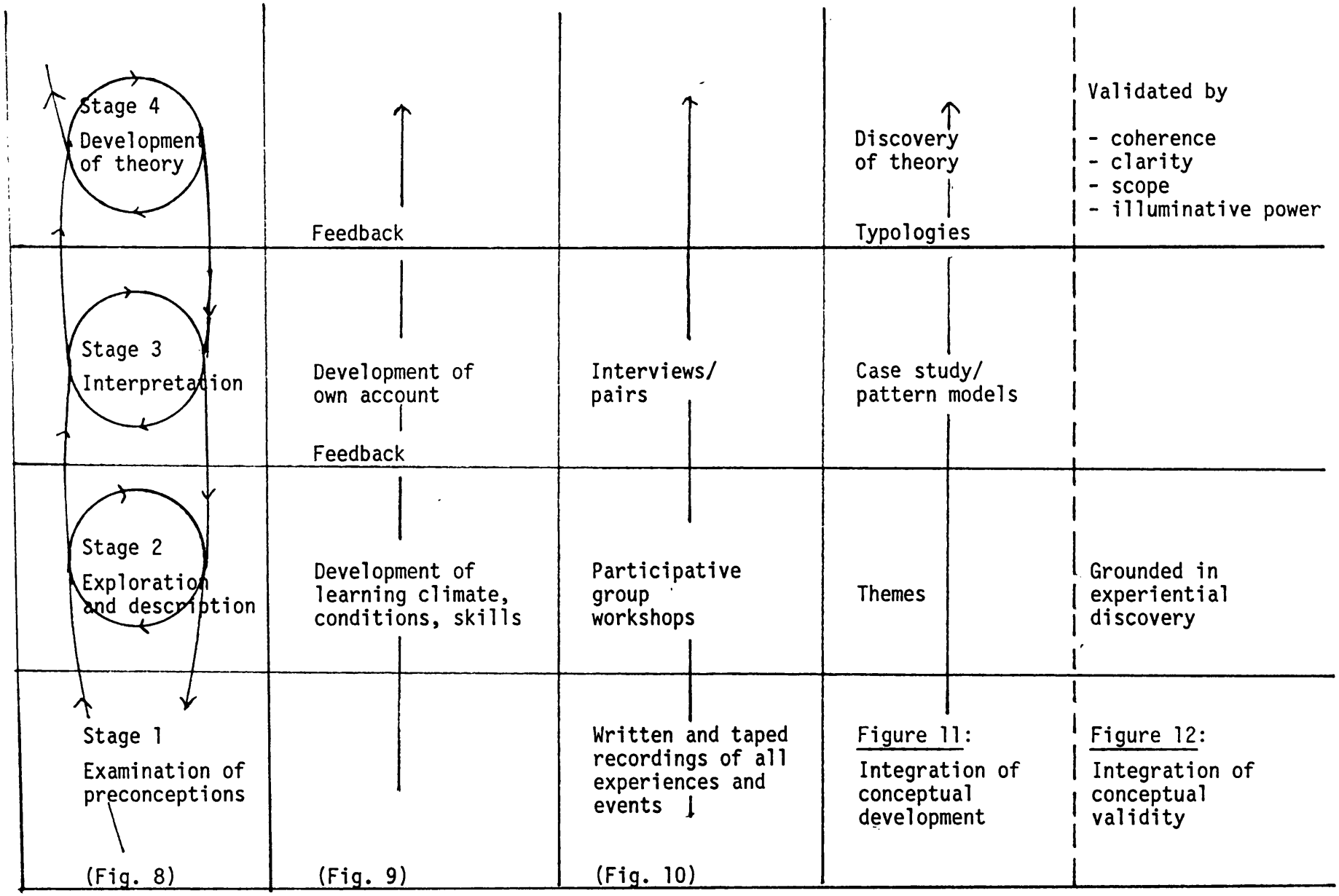
of my own assumptions and perceptions, and to the achievement of inter-subjective agreement. When I began though I had no set plans for the precise timing of the interviews in relation to the experiential and conceptual development. I was not sure then to what extent participants would want to 'write' their own interpretation, or to what extent this would fall to me, nor precisely what roles each would take in the processes of consolidation of informatin. The precise strategy for interviewing would follow from this.

3.5 The integration of conceptual development and conceptual validity (Fig. 11)

In the fourth stage, the development of a general theory, one of the further issues was the question of how the commonality of meaning and conceptual categorisations could be discovered in individual interpretations; how and to what extent the common theory building could begin in and become a part of the experiential workshops and influence the development of individual interpretations. It was essential that this was effected to some degree, to enable participants to contribute to the general propositional development, and to permit the elimination of unsupported concepts and the movement towards shared concepts and structures from a fairly early stage of the interpretative process.

Adopting Diesing's general model for theoretical development (1972), it seemed appropriate to assume that the identification of 'themes' and the development of case studies would fall into the participative phases of empirical inquiry, but that the development of typologies of the case studies and of the general theory would fall into the later more reflective stages.

I accepted the analytic guidelines of the constant comparative method, the way of making sense of diversity by continuous comparison of phenomena, seeking constancy in similarities and identifying differences, and then finding a new order encompassing both and existing in



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their inter-relationship. I accepted Diesing's guidelines of looking for the missing connections, for where the pattern does not fit and demands a new ordering, adding as many segments to the pattern as the material required, rather than trying to squeeze everything into a neat but more exclusive and abstract model.

Conceptual validity (Fig. 12)

I adopted as general criteria for conceptual validity the notions of 'coherence', 'clarity', the greatest possible 'scope' of application to the area under study, and that the theory should 'illuminate' rather than seek to 'explain' in any absolute sense (and certainly not to 'predict' for any purpose other than in helping the individual to anticipate more accurately). I felt that Diesing's notion (1972) of 'contextual' validity would be covered in the procedures for empirical validity, but accepted that if the theory were to have any conceptual validity at all it should be firmly grounded in experiential, personally verified discovery by the participants.

I retained the view of Glaser (1978: 134) that the actual processes of testing and verification could not be presented in writing, especially if continuous, but that the written account should contain adequate information about the methodology in practice to convey to the reader that processes for conceptual verification and for contextual authentication had been followed, and should include my own account of personal experiences and feelings through the inquiry, as participant in the research.

I also accepted and found helpful Diesing's view (1972) that the purpose of conceptual development through typologies and general theory, and criteria for testing it, is that of helping to illuminate and increase understanding of the preceding 'lower level' categorisation, and that typologies should help to illuminate individual cases while theory illuminates typologies, and ultimately individual experience, through

the discovery of relationships and connections of deeper significance and wider scope. Again this is a question for the reader, tested by the extent to which the presentation of the inquiry conveys this.

There were still however a number of questions which the holistic model raised, but could only be resolved in practice, questions which were to be explored in the inquiry itself.

4. The unanswered questions

4.1 The question of conceptual development

There was still the problem of how the development of individual profiles would emerge to give an interpretation of 'personal development through life', how the themes and connecting patterns of relationship between past and present experiences would emerge, and what kind of interpretation and conceptual model would develop. Diesing (1972) points out that the holistic method in research is used for understanding what is there in concrete experience, focusing on actual conflicts and practical solutions for the future, rather than for exploring the hypothetical workings of unconscious processes, and intrapersonal psychodynamics. In theory, the holistic method would be inappropriate for developing for example a psychodynamic model. But was this necessarily so? Can we understand ourselves without positing unconscious processes or using 'ideal' concepts? This was something to be explored in inquiry, with the participants.

4.2 The question of integrating all aspects of inquiry

Then the problem of 'demands' again raised its head. Participating in inquiry, writing my own account of what happened to illuminate the context of inquiry as well, trying to meet all epistemological objectives of inquiry, all concerns for validity was a high order, given the limited timescale that I had. How would I find an integration between methodological and epistemological concerns? Was it more important to concentrate on what was actually happening 'here and now', to explore my own

emotional involvement in inquiry, or to pursue my original aims of developing a theory about personal development as a life phenomenon? I was already realising something of a shift in my understanding of what experiential research was all about.

4.3 The conflict between the 'rules' and creativity

Perhaps the most difficult problem to emerge from the discussion of methodological design was the dilemma between structure and absence of structure. Accepting that the method must develop according to the moment of its context, and that any hypothetical criteria and conditions for validity and its testing must be subject to the actualities of human life, designing an inquiring system cannot be compared to the process of designing a house, with precise specifications and procedures, and a precise image of the outcome. The problem is compounded by the philosophy of co-operative research - according to which of course, all of this discussion should have been a joint venture, and all criteria agreed co-operatively.

The dilemma is inherent in the 'design' of any inductive or semi-inductive methodology (as Glaser and Strauss' rigid specifications illustrate (1967)), and lies perhaps in the concept of 'methodology' itself, which implies a rationale and therefore rules. The problem of using rules is how to avoid self-justification. Adopting a human philosophy which sees 'rules' as likely to be as alienating as they are helpful, a further problem in 'human' 'science' is that of determining what rules are likely to be helpful and developmental to other human beings, and not merely to oneself. I was not sure to what extent the new paradigm methodologies really resolved this problem, rejecting one set of rules only to substitute another, albeit co-operatively.

One solution to the alienation issue is to accept that there must be some 'closing down' right from the start, to look for participants who are likely to find the same kind of criteria, conditions and values

alienating or helpful as oneself, and to accept that this will severely limit the social scope of inquiry, but that it will of course be efficient in the definition and achievement of what constitutes valid knowing.

'Validation' however may be a disguise for self-rationalisation, fortified by the sharing of values. Another solution, the one that I adopted, is to accept that the rules should only be guidelines, that they are not absolute, and should not be adopted and put into practice if they are not found to be helpful and genuinely creative.

I preferred to follow an approach that was more congruent with my own personal philosophy of keeping options open, of accepting many possible viewpoints, of not developing an unquestioned commitment to any ideal until it was proven in practice. I chose to look upon the conditions and procedures discussed as 'provisional', and subject to modification and development in inquiry. I accepted that there would be some inevitable limitations to the social scope and kind of person who would want to take part in a research inquiry, but was anxious to minimise this as far as was possible, and to minimise, through encouraging diversity of interests, the dangers of inquiry becoming merely an exercise in self-validation and self-justification. In the last resort, should there be an irresolvable conflict, I accepted that creativity, finding the unexpected and unplanned, was a more important value and objective than meeting any other criteria prescribed by 'science'.

4.4 The problem of self-questioning: the capacity of the method to defeat itself

Last but not least there was a paradox about the new paradigm methodologies which I felt myself being drawn into, adding further complications to the method. If the researcher accepts his/her own fallibility, and the need to question personal attitudes and apparently rational thought systems, he/she must also learn to differentiate between those that are valid, and those that are founded upon emotional defences.

Beginning with my own reaction to the new paradigm methodologies, I began to understand the implications of this. I realised for example that I personally found some of the procedures advocated quite alienating. I did not easily take to the kind of what I thought were mechanistic and systematic approaches to feedback which were advocated in Heron's model. I longed for a looser and what seemed to me a less restricting framework, less dogged in its approach. I reacted to the implication of Heron's model that personal learning lies invariably through the experience and discharge of personal distress and tears. I discovered that my own personal philosophy conflicted with this, and that although I had myself suffered a great deal of unhappiness in the not so distant past, I had learned that the way for me to cope with it was by putting a bright face on it. I did not relish the idea of conducting a research inquiry submerged in tears, wondering how I would ever get through the work involved in such a situation. I believed that learning could and should be fun, and that our light-hearted and humorous sides are no less real or significant.

I realised that my concern for working with 'lay' participants, with those who were not necessarily familiar with the concepts and practices of humanistic psychology, was based in part upon a fear of being identified as someone in an exclusive ivory tower - even if this were true - by virtue of my own background and education, and by a need of my own to engage with as wide a section of the population as was going to be possible.

Realising all these feelings, I found myself caught in a paradoxical bind where I was obliged to decide upon what I did believe in, and to enter upon it with confidence, but was at the same time obliged to constantly question the basis of my judgement, and never finally accept it.

I was plagued with the question - were my choices valid, or were

they rooted in a mystery-mastery strategy or unaware projection? Were they just a subtle facade for my defences? In the same way, I began to question the entire basis of the new paradigm methods - were they simply defensive strategies of a different order, to rationalise a particular way of being in the world?

Throughout inquiry this dilemma of certainty and uncertainty was to persist, and was never eradicated. I found that the way in which I could cope with it was to try to use the knowledge derived from my own reactions to understand how others might be reacting in a different way, to test it out, and to follow the guidance of intuition in sensing the appropriate way forward.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIRST PROJECT : INTEGRATING INDIVIDUAL AND WORK

In this chapter I shall describe the course and the findings of the first empirical inquiry conducted (Project A) to which I gave the name 'Integrating Individual and Work'.

The presentation is divided into the following stages of the project:

(1) The identification of primary phenomena for exploration on the basis of my own preconceptions of 'personal development' as a life phenomenon

(2) The recruitment of participants and contract setting

(3) The workshops

(4) The follow-up: interviews and the development of individual interpretations

(5) The development of a general theory.

My aim is not to separate the conceptualisation from the action and activities of the inquiry, but to show the integration of the two in the practice of the experiential method.

Introduction : A recap of objectives

In setting out on the first project my general objectives were to enable individuals to research and explore the nature of their own experiences of development in their own lives, to explore their own identity and self-perceptions, and to develop a theory founded on a shared understanding and interpretation of this, within the experiential and theoretical framework discussed in the preceding chapter: that is, through a combination of workshops and individual interviews facilitating the exploration, description, interpretation and theorisation of experience.

The method as such would be an exercise in personal learning and development for those who took part in it, through the re-entry into, and clarification of the meaning of experiences, past and present, and

through the attendant exploration of conflicts, contradictions and incongruencies in perceptions, and through the differentiation between significant and insignificant experience. It would be an opportunity for participants to learn generally through the re-evaluation of their experiencing, rather than through the implementation of a specific learning plan for each, though it would provide the opportunity to develop ideas and plans for future action, new choices, on the basis of the insights achieved in inquiry.

Stage (1) The Identification of Primary Phenomena

Although I hoped that the participants would contribute as fully as possible to the identification of phenomena for exploration, I found that in order to even talk about my ideas to interested parties I needed to have some clear ideas of what I was interested in exploring, and also thought it advisable to prepare a number of exercises and a semi-structured framework which might be adopted as a starting point without prescribing the precise course of events. I began by identifying those phenomena which I saw as central to the process of personal development as experiential learning through life, and by establishing a concrete focus which might anchor the inquiry in everyday experiencing.

1. Establishing a concrete focus: Identity and 'work'

How to begin? Reflecting on my own experience and interests in the relationship between my own sense of identity and what I was engaged in at work, or in my activities through the days, I was particularly taken by Levinson's comment (1978):

> "A man's work is the primary base for his life in society .. work is also of great psychological importance. It is a vehicle for the fulfilment and negation of the central aspects of the self." (p.29)

While it seemed fairly obvious that 'work' in the sense of a career is important to most men, and Levinson's interest is in men rather than

and not so much as women, I saw no reason why the concept of 'work' should not be taken to refer to whatever we engage on in our lives, however we purposefully and actively participate in the world in which we live, whether this is making money, making things, building a home, building a relationship, bringing up a family, artistic expression, making music and so on.

I felt that identity and the process of development might be explored through our experiences in our work in the world, through the exploration of what and how it is important to us, accepting perhaps a view of life where the philosophy of the interdependence of reflection and action is translated into the protestant ethic and a belief in our need to 'do' something with our lives.

I decided that the project would seek to inquire into how we each learn, develop and change through the course of our 'work' in our adult lives, or not as the case may be.

2. Establishing the conceptual focus

Given this focus, the questions then were what particular phenomena or aspects of experience would it be appropriate to explore, given my conceptual interests in identity as a dialectic of contradictory experiences? - of being all that we want to be and yet wanting to be more than this, of feeling whole and yet only part of what we might be, of experiencing continuity and constancy and yet forever changing? I decided upon the following concepts as central categories of experiencing to explore in an empirical inquiry into the nature of identity as a dialectic of part and whole, of constancy and change, through our active participation in the world.

(i) The definition of the 'life-world'

A preliminary and essential task would be the definition of the 'life-world' of the individual - not only the activities which were of importance, but the total context of people and places and events which

defined the boundaries of individual identity, and which would help to explore the characteristic attitudes and behaviours of his/her total 'life-style' (Allport, 1955: 39), and facilitate understanding of identity as a dialectic of experiencing and action in the world in the manner described by Merleau-Ponty (1962) as:

> "that formula which sums up some unique manner of behaviour towards others, towards Nature, time and death: a certain way of patterning the world' (p.xviii)

- which would in other words facilitate understanding of how each found meaning in their lives, through their concrete activities in the world.

(ii) Self-image

I accepted that how we see ourselves and evaluate ourselves is a central aspect of our sense of identity, accepting the view of Rogers (1967) that "self-acceptance", a liking for oneself is an essential aspect of our sense of being whole, and all that we want to be.

(iii) Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction

These were the general terms which I adopted as a starting point for exploring the contradictory experiences of being, seeing the major contradiction as that of the dialectic between a sense of personal 'fulfilment' or 'self-actualisation' - however this might be defined by the individual - and that of 'wanting', of feeling deficient in some sense.

(iv) Conflict

This was the sine qua non of the inquiry, for the conceptualisation of identity and of learning as dialectical process, and for the development of the method as a method of personal learning through the uncovering of conflicts. The potential ways in which the phenomenon might be defined were innumerable, whether in terms of the experience of actual conflict with somebody or something, interpersonal conflict, or intra-personal conflict, conflict within oneself, or in terms of the inherent conflict between the opposite poles of the learning dialectic or the Jungian dimensions of orienting attitudes (see pp.15ff above).

I began with no specific or fixed idea about the nature and the role of the experience of conflict in our development - my aim was to allow this to emerge from the empirical inquiry, through the exploration and meaning given by individuals in their own experience.

(v) Change

Again, an essential aspect of the notion of identity and learning as dialectic, there were many possible forms of change which were implicated in the dialectical framework - change from one experiential pole to another, from the experience of being part to the experience of being whole, from one experience of partiality to another, from one dialectical synthesis to another; as part of a natural process of changing perceptions of what is significant in life; as part of a process of adaptation to the world; and, especially in relation to my own interests, as deliberate action to make self-directed changes and in a permanent experiential dialectic with constancy and continuity.

There were two main ways through which the phenomenon might be explored - (a) as the experience of change in oneself, and (b) as the experience of making changes in the world, and deliberately changing self - the one associated with our passive being in an active world, and the other with our active being in a passive world.

(vi) Similarities with and differences from others

I was interested in the ideas that our identity is always one of paradox, knowing ourselves through identifying with others, through our similarities, and yet always knowing ourselves as unique individuals (Bronowski: 1965); and that we tend towards 'homonomy', submerging our individuality in the collective superindividual whole of society, and also towards 'autonomy', seeking mastery and control in our own individual interests (Angyal, 1941).

I chose the phenomena of similarities with and differences from others as potential avenues for exploring identity as a dialectic of

individuality and of being at one with the world and with others.

These concepts might seem vague and ill-defined to the discriminating reader, but at this stage such was my aim. Any further specification might prejudice the inquiry, but the concepts as such might be offered to participants as a potential framework for their own explorations of personal development.

3. Devising a project title: 'Integrating Individual and Work'

Adopting the view that our experience of identity in being-in-the-world is that of a mutual interdependence and mutual development involving adaptation as well as growth, I chose the concept of 'integration' to depict the total context of our development, 'integration' not only in the sense of an interior unity and harmony of parts, but in the dialectical sense of our relatedness as a whole to the world, as a whole in the world.

I decided to approach the inquiry by asking the questions - 'How do we learn, develop and change through our work in the world, how do we become what we want to be, given the demands that our work and the world make upon us, given the potential for conflict between us and the world? How do we achieve an identity that is integrated with the world?'

The title that I chose for the project was 'Integrating Individual and Work'.

Stage (2) The Recruitment of Participants and Contract Setting

I decided to advertise the project through as many channels as possible, with no preconceived ideas or conditions of selection of participants other than that they should be interested in undertaking an inquiry into their own experiences of personal development which would also form the basis of a personal research thesis; and that they should be capable of taking responsibility for themselves in the project.

The response that I received to the broadsheet circulated was significant for the delimitation of the field to which my interests and

ideas and methodological approach were appropriate. Although I was given gratuitous advertising in the local press, and was given access to many businesses and commercial companies in the area, and spoke to a range of people working in different positions of responsibility, from clerical assistants to managers, the major part of the response came from those working in the fields of education and the 'caring' professions, including several from the social services organisation for which I had previously worked as a training officer, within an age range from twenty to fifty-four.

Although I had originally intended to work with a small number of ten or so, thinking that there may be casualties along the line I decided to invite all to an initial introductory meeting and to take it from there. My aims at the first meeting were to introduce ourselves to each other; to outline the experiential framework that I had in mind; to enable participants to propose alternatives and bring their ideas into the project planning; to begin to explore some of the phenomena to 'try out' the kind of thing we might engage in in the later workshops; and to agree and clarify a programme acceptable to all, our objectives generally and individually, and to establish our initial roles and expectations of each other. These aims were set out in more detail in a leaflet given to those who attended.

We began the 'trying out' with simple scanning exercises of the kind developed in co-counselling (see p. 75 above), and designed to help participants to not only develop and deepen their self-awareness but to learn to focus attention on different aspects, one at a time, and to listen to the other in their total physical and psychological being. In these exercises, the group split into pairs, each then taking a turn to verbally explore all possible aspects of a particular phenomenon, talking continuously for the duration of several minutes, while their partner listened with full attention, taking in the full 'presence' of

the other, using eye contact and so on, but not interrupting; and then reversing roles. The kind of phenomena chosen were very simple - 'Today', 'My feelings now', and so on.

This was followed by a group exercise in which participants were invited to brainstorm and pool their ideas about the potential that we have for development and change, and the kind of experiences which each associated with their development and change, and then to present their ideas in a general feedback session.

Finally, those who confirmed their wish to take part in the workshop project were asked to think about the things they valued most in their life, to jot them down and bring them to the first workshop.

Of the twenty or so who attended the first meeting, eighteen were keen to follow the project through, and not wishing to 'reject' anyone who had shown interest, I accepted all those who wished to participate. These were:

Jenny, aged twenty, a nursery nurse

Linda, also in her twenties, a legal secretary

Bob, aged twenty-nine, a comprehensive school teacher

Pam, aged twenty-nine, a nurse

Dave, in his early thirties, a shipping clerk

Steve, in his early thirties, a lawyer

Jane, aged thirty-one, a social work training officer

Rose, aged thirty-one, a kindergarten teacher

Sue, aged thirty-two, who runs her own tapestry business

Colin, aged thirty-eight, a primary school headmaster

Tom, in his thirties, a lecturer

Carol, aged forty-one, a manager of children's nursery services

Bill, aged forty-two, a local government officer working in the field of youth services

Meg, aged forty-three, an organiser of nursery services

Peter, in his forties, an editor and journalist

Nina in her forties, a personnel officer

Mark, aged forty-seven, a manager in a counselling organisation

Alan, aged fifty-four, a lecturer

While the overlap in professional interests may have limited the 'sampling' range of the inquiry there was an important advantage to be gained from this. From the start the group got on well together, and were genuinely interested in each other, developing easily and naturally the climate of co-operation and mutual support so essential to the experiential method that I had adopted. What might have been lost in range was outweighed by the gains of the relative ease with which participants developed mutual trust and the ability to open up to each other, and to explore deeper feelings.

Stage (3) : The Workshops

Although we discussed how to go about the exploration of our experiences, it was perhaps inevitable that in a personally initiated project as such, the participants would decide to leave the planning and organisation to me, providing that they might dissent from it and pursue other methods or even leave the project if it seemed inappropriate to them. The group agreed to follow the two session workshop programme that I devised, with a fortnight's interval in between.

1. The first workshop

In the intervening period between the introductory meeting and the first workshop I drew up a rough schedule for a detailed programme of activities, aware of the fact that the . . . efficient use of time would be critical to the enquiry, and that the activities would need to be fairly tightly scheduled if we were to explore our experiences in any great depth and detail, and make the first steps towards distinguishing the significant from the insignificant, and establishing the beginnings

of a conceptual focus and of thematisation.

I decided that it would be wise to begin with a focus on a relatively short period of time in individual experience, the last five or seven years or so, and to explore the fuller life-history of each participant in the follow-up stage (unless of course the participants decided to meet for further group activities). In the first workshop my objective was to facilitate the detailed exploration of present identity and experiences of change in the last few years. The activities ranged from drawing oneself and one's life world, to identifying and exploring in different group combinations some of the phenomena which I had accepted as central to the general theme of identity and development.

All discussions were recorded on tape and I encouraged the participants to keep note books in which they might note whatever they wanted to record and felt was significant during the entire course of the project.

Although I began with the intention to join in the experiential exercises and to take part in the research myself I found that the sheer time and energy involved in making sure that the right materials were available in the right place at the right time, that participants were clear about what they were going to do next, that all the tape recorders were functioning, that adequate space was available and the kettles were boiling, precluded my participation as such. I learned then that either a smaller group or assistance in facilitation would be required if I were to take part at all, and that the simpler the programme the better. The problem was to find a balance between being over-ambitious in what we might hope to achieve, and introducing enough variation in activities and ideas to provide a rich ground from which a full description of individual experience might follow without prejudice.

My own thoughts and feelings at the time were mostly absorbed by the exigencies of facilitation, the main worry being "would we get through the afternoon without falling into some kind of deadlock?". But in my

own conversations with the participants I began to feel a greater openness by some than others; Jane, Sue, Carol, Mark, Alan for example showing an easy acclimatisation to the group climate; while others showed greater reserve in the group, Linda and Dave for example; and I felt a sense of immediate aggression on the part of Tom, who contributed enthusiastically but as if fighting for a cause, as if he needed to persuade the group to agree to his views. I began to realise how I was already forming my own picture of each person's character which was based as much on the intuitive feelings derived in our mutual presence, as on what was actually said. These were feelings which I would need to check out with the participants in our one-to-one sessions to see if this was how they saw themselves as well; and which also formed a base on which I could question the significance of what was expressed verbally, and from which later explore with the participant the particular incongruencies which emerged for me in their accounts of themselves.

2. The second workshop

At the end of the first workshop I asked the participants to prepare for the second by identifying a particular experience of conflict in their lives, past or present, and to bring with them a description of the situation, of their thoughts and feelings at the time, any action taken and its consequences. The second workshop was to be devoted to exploring the issue of conflict in some depth, and to making a start on establishing the framework for interpretation.

In the intervening fortnight I was also able to listen to the material taped from the first, and we began the session with a review of the themes which were emerging from the group in general and the points of interest which I found in looking at the drawings of each person's life world; then following through to the exploration in small groups of each person's conflict.

In the 'conflict' sessions I encouraged participants to give each

other as much mutual help as possible, helping each member in turn to identify and explore further the contradictions in their experiencing and to find new ways of looking at their conflict. These groups, as those during the first day, followed the general pattern of description followed by discussion and interpretation, forming in themselves a microcosm of the hermeneutic phenomenological method, combined with an experiential/co-operative approach. Finally, in the last of the workshop periods we spent some time as a large group discussing the basic conceptual framework that was emerging.

As a result of the activities of the previous session, we had found that there were three main contexts of identity in each person's life - 'Work' outside the home, 'Home' and relationships with family, and also 'Community', which included for example voluntary work, political or church activities, or as in Pam's case, her 'hobby' as a nurse in the territorial army. These contexts were the ground for the central experiences which contributed to the sense of identity - the experiences of 'fulfilment', a term which along with the word 'success' was used by participants in association with the experience of satisfaction in their lives; of 'dissatisfaction'; and of 'conflict'.

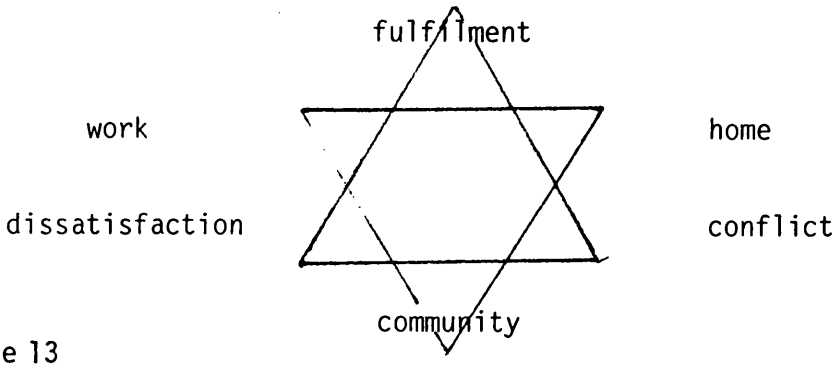


Figure 13

Presenting this framework to the group, in the final discussion some important ideas began to emerge about the form and the content of the phenomena contributing to identity, particularly about the role of conflict.

'Wholeness' or 'Integration' was defined in terms of characteristics

associated with fulfilment and success - for example: 'Having power, control, and being on top of the job' (Mark); 'Feeling accepted and having ideas accepted by others' (Tom); 'Feeling needed' (Sue).

There was an immediate consensus, unprovoked on my part, that conflict lay at the heart of the process, and a great deal of debate and dissent ensued about the extent and qualities of conflict in individual experiences. Colin declared that the experience of conflict in his responsibilities as a headmaster had changed his life and his personality. Tom spoke of his life as an infinite series of conflicts arising from the perpetual contradiction that he experienced between wanting something and knowing what his values were in life, and also knowing that they could not be lived out in his work as an educationalist. Jane on the other hand rejected any idea of division within herself, preferring to speak of 'differences', and Sue suggested that some people could live without any experiences of conflict.

Discussion developed about the role of conflict in relation to the experiences of integration and fulfilment, Jane declaring that she felt surer of herself as a result of experiencing a major conflict in her life, and Mark noting that conflict could be destructive. This dialectical conceptualisation of conflict as both a positive and a negative experience was to be a key aspect of the emerging theory, and in further discussion it was proposed that central aspects of the role of conflict were (a) the quality of individual awareness and perceptions - Steve noting that it was an awareness of others that brought conflict - and (b) the ability to accept others and their values, Colin noting that the ability to conform and to assume social responsibilities helped to alleviate conflict. There was a consensus that each of us makes our own choice of what to accept and what to fight and reject, and that each of us must find some kind of balance in this.

Finally the relationship between the experience of conflict and

personal development and change was touched upon, all agreeing that the ability to decide to take action to change the ability to influence decisions, and the freedom to move and change jobs were vital to the transformation of conflict into a positive experience furthering fulfilment and success. The problem for further interpretation and theoretical development was to explore the relationship between the experience of conflict, the total experiential context of personal identity and the experience of change.

We agreed at the end of the workshop that I would first prepare descriptive summaries of the workshop tapes for each individual participant, and would meet with each for further discussion and interpretation.

My main feelings at the end of the second workshop were of exhaustion and immense gratitude. I felt indebted to everyone for the time they had spared to take part, finding my earlier fears of total collapse unsubstantiated. From this point on though I found my own feelings being drawn more and more into the inquiry and posing considerable problems for the method.

Stage (4) The follow-up Period : Descriptions, Interviews and Interpretations

In the following months I transcribed all of the tapes, and drawing together the other material written and drawn by the participants, prepared profiles for each which were a description of their experiences as related by them, and part in the workshops. I sent all their own description and followed this with lengthy interviews, during which we explored and taped further experiences in the total context of their life time, and I was able to test out my own preconceptions, to confront where there were unexplored conflicts and contradictions in their own accounts. The interviews were thus both affirmative and developmental, providing a forum for confirming individual perceptions for clarifying the experiences

of significance, and also bringing in new description and facilitating the further interpretation of this. I found unfortunately that three of the participants, Rose, Linda and Dave, did not want to meet with me to discuss their profiles further, although agreeing to endorse them, and so was unable in their cases to explore any further aspects of their experiencing. Their choice was significant, each as it transpired in the tapes experiencing a period of unhappiness and depression at the time of the project. Although I wished that I might have been able to take this further with them, to facilitate a more positive resolution of their experiences of conflict rather than leave them in the air as it were, I respected their choice to leave things as they were and had no alternative anyway but to accept it.

All participants with the exception of Tom endorsed their descriptions with only minor changes. Tom made the important point that unless he had actually written the profile it must be at best only my description which was empathetic to his experiences, and it could never actually be his experience. I accepted this as true of any written word about another, but asked Tom if he could write his own profile which might portray more authentically the essence of his experiencing, and amend the profile that I had written so that it was more empathetic. We did the latter, but in spite of, and perhaps congruently with, his pursuit of a solipsist perspective Tom did not eventually submit his own account of his experiences, and I accepted that his profile was only a valid account of my experiencing of him - although paradoxically it felt to me that this was what he had wanted.

Apart from working through the problems for the method which these cases posed, and coming to terms with the fact that there will inevitably be some variation in the quality of congruence between an individual's experience and another's description - let alone interpretation of it - I also encountered considerable difficulty in coping with my own feelings

during the writing up, feelings of guilt and anxiety which arrived quite unexpectedly.

Although I had followed as co-operative, democratic and non-alienating an approach as possible, my gratitude to the participants began to turn into guilt. I felt guilty about looking into other people's private lives for my own ends, although they had chosen to participate. I felt that I was using and manipulating them and worried about misusing the 'power' of the facilitating role to achieve my own selfish ends perhaps at a cost to them. I had a struggle with myself about the ethics of doing research, and was influenced by Jourard's account of the alienation experienced by 'subjects' in psychological research (1968: 13-17).

I became desperately worried about feeding back information that was highly emotionally charged and likely to re-awaken anger and unhappiness about including information that might lead to the individual, if identified, being accused of slander and the like, and about preserving anonimity. I realised eventually that I was acting over-protectively, and had to make a conscious effort to give participants the honour of being in charge of themselves. I was aware throughout the interviews of my worry about creating undue distress and made a determined effort to counter this by deliberate confrontation - a practice which, although exhausting and initially nerve-wracking, helped to combat my anxieties and fears by proving them unfounded.

After the first round of interviews I prepared a second round of profiles which were more highly conceptualised, and although grounded in the original description and the presentation of experience by the participants were an integrated interpretation combining both of our perspectives. These were in turn fed back to the participants for endorsement and amendment, and in some instances I went to see the participants for a second time. (For an example of the profiles, see appendix.)

The next and final stage was the development of a general theory.

Stage (5) : The Development of a General Theory

Following the guidance of the holistic method (see pp.62-63 above), I made the transition from individual interpretations, and the themes inherent in these, to a general theory through the development of 'typologies'. I shall describe this final stage in two parts -

1. The development and presentation of the emerging typologies, and
2. The general theory emerging through the typologies.

1. The development and presentation of typologies

In developing the individual profiles I aimed to give as complete a picture as possible of the thoughts and feelings of the individual about his or her occupation at the present time, and to set these perceptions in the wider context of the life of the individual; to highlight the specific activities and interests through which the individual identity is developed and realised, both at home and in work and in life outside both; and to set this in the context of individual's experiences of satisfaction or fulfilment, dissatisfaction and conflict and change.

There were many possible ways in which differentiation into typologies might be made. There were some interesting differences between the values and sources of fulfilment for the two sexes for example. In the accounts of the women the experience of identity was usually related, even when engaged in full-time employment outside the home, to activities and interests in the home, to relationships with husband, children and roles and responsibilities in the home, and change is related to the changing needs of their children. In contrast, the accounts of the men focused almost exclusively on the experiences and activities of occupation outside the home. Fulfilment and conflict and change were related to experiences of task achievement, of recognition and progression at work. The picture of their identity was drawn almost exclusively from interactions at work and from the development of occupational role.

Another possible differentiation was that of age and related 'career position'. The participants spoke from a range of 'starting out', 'intermediate' or 'well-established' or 'finishing' positions in their particular roles at work and home - Steve, for example, still finding his feet in his profession as a lawyer, Jenny preparing to be married in the near future, while those in their forties were well established in their particular professions and in their marriages, or have experienced divorce.

But it was not these differentiations that provided the basis for theoretical development; it was rather the attitude of the individual as a whole, his or her 'basic orientation' to life. There were striking differences between individuals in the strength of their feelings of satisfaction, dissatisfaction and conflict, and in the relative importance of these phenomena in the attitude of the individual as a whole. There were four distinct groupings in which the attitude of the individual to conflict was of central importance.

Each of these groupings showed a particular pattern of interaction between the experiences of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, conflict and change, in the life of the individual and a corresponding orientation and self-image. The description following aims to present

(i) the four different orientations,

(ii) the central experiences and pattern of experiential interactions through which this attitude is realised, in relation especially to the experience of conflict,

(iii) the perspective or meaning of 'development' which emerges in each group.

Each typological account begins with a description of the central characteristics of the particular orientation; explores the development of this in the experience of individuals in the group; and summarises the emerging pattern of experiential learning. Each describes as such

a process of identity development in the life of the individual in which the phenomena of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, conflict and change provide the basic elements for the conceptualisation of experiential learning as life process of development.

The four groupings are:

Group A : Jane, Pam, Colin, Carol

Group B : Steve, Jenny, Meg, Nina, Peter, Bill, Bob

Group C : Alan, Tom, Mark

Group D : Sue, Rose, Linda, Dave

Group A : Jane, Carol, Colin, Pam

The most striking, defining characteristic of Group A is the positive attitude, the certainty and confidence with which each speaks of their many satisfactions in life, both at work and in the home :

Colin: "I'm normally one of those people who is very contented... Now I feel that I am getting somewhere ... it occurred to me that I was doing something that was important, that they were going to need for the rest of their lives ... It sounds like a running crisis but I just enjoy what I'm doing and I find I can go from one thing to another fairly smoothly ... it's an opportunity to use your initiative ... look at life a hundred years ago and compare it with your own - I see it that way and feel happy ... I have a happy life because I have a nice family ..."

Jane: "I'm sure work is where most of my identity comes from, where I've experienced most success ... an absolutely superb period, a lot of personal growth, new skills, new opportunities, which has made other aspects of my life coloured as well, opening up many new avenues and directions ... there are still things to achieve within my grasp and capacity ... I don't want to change much in either my work or home life ... I'm lucky being married to someone who accepts me as I am ..."

Carol: "I am integrated in my own mind between my family and my work ... I want to do a good job in my working situation, I'm going to keep

my husband happy, I'm going to have a good relationship with my children because I'm going to take the time to make sure that I do ... I'm sure that a stable family is the be all and end all in many ways ... I don't always enjoy meetings but you battle on and find you have achieved something after all... I found it easy to get back to work after having children ... success has come easily to me ..."

Pam: "There are so many things I enjoy ... I've never thought of giving up ... the sense of achievement in actually seeing patients recover and knowing you have been able to help them ... I think the uniform is very important ... it's recognised you're going up the ladder ... there are many opportunities open."

Colin, a teacher, Jane, a training officer, Carol, a manager of nursery services, and Pam, a nurse, all emphasise their enjoyment in their work and the integration of their work with their home life. It is an attitude of "I am and I can", to which many factors contribute, and which the experience of conflict apparently reinforces. Each expresses an easy identification with and acceptance of their role at work, and an awareness and pride in their abilities and what they are doing. None doubts the value of their work or their ability to do their job well: Carol says that she sometimes worries that her confidence appears as arrogance to those she works with. The most significant element of this attitude is the experience of personal fulfilment, or 'success'.

Carol speaks of success in gaining promotion, Pam speaks of a sense of achievement in knowing that she had helped others, Jane speaks of success as the development of skills in herself, and Colin speaks of feeling that he is "getting somewhere" or achieving something. Success has many meanings for each, but it is recognised primarily through two kinds of experience: (i) fulfilling personal standards, values and expectations and needs for stimulation, performance, behaviour and relationship (ii) experiencing recognition of this by others, most often through the

achievement of promotion. Each speaks of relationships enjoyed with family and colleagues at work - Colin says that he tried to think, without success, of a relationship that was difficult, and Jane and Carol stress the importance of "getting it right". Success brings confidence in abilities for the achievement of task, and for relationship to others.

Success also brings security - again with many meanings. Each stresses the ability and security of the relationships achieved in their personal lives - "My work life has always been subtly influenced by my husband" says Jane. Pam speaks of her forthcoming marriage, and Colin and Carol emphasise the value of their stable family life. All feel confident in the security of their career, both the opportunities existing for further promotion and success, and their ability to find another job. Security is associated with freedom - "I don't feel trapped" says Carol and "I feel I could do anything" says Pam. "I don't have time to think of ambitions ... I feel I could cope with anything" says Colin.

It may be significant that each of Group A is midway through a career which offers responsibility, a degree of personal autonomy and freedom within the role prescribed, and an intrinsic social value in the nature of the work. All are roles involving the guidance and support of others, and Pam, as a nursing sister, describes the enjoyment she has found in the teaching aspects of her work, and her ambitions to become a nurse trainer. Carol sees herself as 'mothering' and giving support to others, using her own skills and abilities. Each feels able to develop their own skills and sources of satisfaction within the limits of the authority given. This is particularly apparent for Pam, who finds many opportunities for social fulfilment and the development of social skills within the limits of the hospital environment. Colin too admits "work takes up the major part of my life" but it is viewed less as an obligation than as a source of enjoyment. Confidence, success and security are accompanied by a sense of freedom to develop ideas, interests and skills within the work role, rather than a sense of frustration at limitations to autonomy

- either self-imposed, or imposed by others. It is an attitude which also seeks to avoid, or if unavoidable, to resolve, conflict.

Conflict: While Pam finds it difficult to think of any conflicts in her work, Colin, Carol and Jane emphasise how avoidance of conflict is possible and why it is desirable. "I have strong feelings about social and political issues, but I know that if I followed them I'd not have time for the rest of my life and my family ... people get very frustrated in a minority" says Colin. Likewise Carol, "You can spend so much time digging yourself into a hole that your job falls by the wayside". Jane says, "I'm lucky, I've had a fairly safe course - if I had wanted to be an engineer I would feel more strongly ... I'm happy because I take life one stage at a time". Each associates conflict with a sense of frustration, of wanting more and wanting to achieve more than is possible or realistic. For Group A, success brings both an attitude that wishes to preserve satisfaction and avoid frustration, and the resources to either avoid it or resolve it. How does this happen?

Avoidance: The avoidance of conflict is seen in part as a deliberate limiting of hopes, expectations and boundaries of experience, in order to preserve the satisfaction within existing boundaries. Pam, although ambitious for further promotion, draws a firm line of 'nursing' around her whole life. Her main leisure activity is as a nursing officer in the territorial army, and she sees it as an integral part of her development through her career. Colin realises that he has a narrow view of politics, seeing it only from the perspective offered by his position as a primary school teacher, but has no wish to extend his time beyond this.

But the absence of conflict appears in many ways to be a direct correlation of success; success excludes the dissatisfactions which others speak of as roots of their conflicts. There is little experience of frustration of needs for achievement or relationship, and little

dissatisfaction expressed either with self or with circumstances. Each appears to realise and fulfil their needs in action - there is little or no conflict between thoughts, feelings and actions. Nevertheless, this is a state only achieved and maintained through experiences of conflict - and as the accounts of Jane, Colin, Pam and Carol show, conflict is and has been an unavoidable experience.

Conflicts and Resolution

Jane: Although Jane says that one of her complexes is that she has no complexes, and that her life has "not led down too many cul-de-sacs so far", she experienced a conflict which amounted to a crisis in her life four years ago, and is something she has only now, in her present job, come to terms with. She resigned from her job as a senior social worker without another to go to, and realising that her career in social work might be terminated. Her conflict arose with the experience of dissatisfaction and frustration in a role in which "you are neither manager nor social worker", and in which she could not identify, on a personal or professional level, with those she was responsible to. Losing respect for her employers through a series of events and circumstances, and finding her own professional decision rejected, experienced conflict in her feeling of frustration and helplessness. "I felt desperate and trapped" Jane says. "I didn't want to compromise to become like them". She began to find a resolution to her conflict when she realised that she could and would resign. She took the risk of losing one base of her life, but found the resourcesto do so, to resolve her conflict, and to survive it. "I felt my personal integrity was threatened" Jane explains, "and I made sure there was a sweet to go with the pill". Her pride was strong enough to prompt her into action when threatened, and her past experiences of success told her that it was realistic to hope for more. "I knew work could be more enjoyable than this" says Jane, "it had to be."

The return path to success was not easy, and Jane says now "I had

underestimated the difficulties". But with the support of her husband throughout, the help of her new colleagues when she found another job, and her successful promotion to the post of training officer, Jane finds her enjoyment restored and her expectations again fulfilled. She experiences a double form of success - success in her work, and success in mastering her conflict. Jane is confident of her ability to survive any further upsets in her career, and speaks of the option she always has to return to field social work.

Colin: Colin also experienced what might be called a "cul-de-sac", which although interrupting his career with a year of conflict and stress, has resulted, as with Jane, in an increased sense of confidence, success and security. Colin's conflict arose in very different circumstances, which led him to doubt the integrity of a senior colleague.

Colin's integrity prompted him to action, but his conflict was complicated by the knowledge that whatever action he took he would be betraying a loyalty he valued - either to his head teacher, or to the children of the school. There was no easy resolution, and in the aftermath of his action Colin faced many difficulties: of facing his own feelings, or running the school in the absence of the head, of defending his own position and integrity.

Now surviving all of these difficulties, Colin's sense of success is deepened considerably, and he says, "My personality has changed ... I have matured ... I have been tried ... I feel now I can cope with anything". A combination of strength in himself and support of colleagues and family helped Colin to turn what he feels might have been a nervous breakdown, into a cul-de-sac he emerged from with pride.

Pam and Carol: Neither Pam nor Carol speak of conflict as a crisis. The conflict Pam speaks of is never fully realised as a conflict, and Carol's conflict does not interrupt her work to any great extent. Pam realises the potential conflict existing between her hopes for further

promotion in her career, the achievement of these hopes, and the continued integration of her career with marriage. She has successfully resolved the conflict between the hours imposed by "shift-work" in hospital nursing and her need to develop her relationship with her fiance - by achieving promotion to a post outside the hospital environment, and with the support and understanding of her fiance. "I'm a simple person" Pam says. "If I had a child the child would come first". Pam sees no need for conflict to exist - she suggests a simple solution in adapting her life to resolve it.

Carol too indicates the part that adaptation plays in the resolution of conflict or difficulty. She states quite simply, "I held the fort" when her husband gave up his job to set up his own business. In the conflict Carol describes in her work, she experienced frustration when her ideas were rejected by her employers - but after her initial anger, Carol says, "perhaps I need to take a fresh look". She accepts their decision.

The resources of success appear as the sources of resolution and adaptation - confidence in self, in the ability to cope, the support and understanding of family and colleagues, confidence in the security of other sources of satisfaction which compensate for dissatisfaction or frustration of need. It is important to note an additional conflict expressed by Carol which does not conform to the pattern of avoidance or resolution otherwise apparent - the conflict she feels in her failure to lose weight. "It's the only thing I've failed at" she reflects, "the satisfaction it would give me in knowing I'm trimmer". Carol's frustration about her physical image suggests another aspect of identity not fully integrated into the central identity suggested and explored in the project. It suggests another state or attitude which runs beside her strong self-image of success, as an image and experience of failure - although it is never allowed to dominate.

Success, Conflict and Change : A Summary

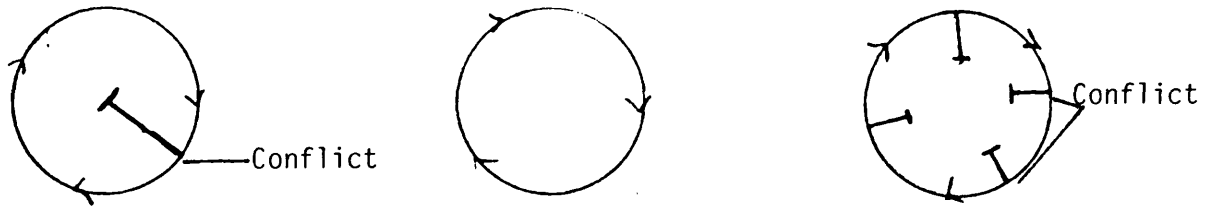
Jane, Colin, Pam and Carol each present an identity in which 'success' is the dominant experience; success in the realisation of personal needs, values and standards, and in the realisation of their recognition and acceptance by others. It is an identity of congruence between thoughts, feelings and actions, and a self-experience which is both knowing and acting. It is the experience of "I am and I can".

With the exception of the additional continuum of frustration expressed by Carol, satisfaction and success give a consistent self-image which is expressed with confidence and clarity.

The unifying principle of both the subjective experience and process of this image emerges as a strong, unified sense of direction. Graphically represented, this might be shown as a single unbroken circle or cycle of experience.

Dissatisfaction and conflict or the potential for conflict are not eliminated from the circle, but are avoided or resolved to allow the resumption of the main dimension, adding strength to the image of self as success, and confirming the continuation of forward direction. Success brings both the will to preserve this direction and the resources to do it. Conflict, although an experience which disturbs and questions, even forcing a step back (as when Jane began work in a job at a lesser level of responsibility), is a process and cul-de-sac temporarily entered - but without any eventual change of direction. Conflict appears as one single experience of crisis in the account of Jane and Colin; it is never actually realised in the experience of Pam; it appears as a number of small conflicts which are entered and resolved and put behind Carol. The cycles of experience of each might be shown as follows :

(see over)



Colin, Jane Pam Carol

Figure 14

Change and Development

The cycles show an inherent contradiction in the concept and experience of change. Each individual experience changes through a sense of progress - progress forward through the development of a career. Jane and Colin speak of the growth in confidence and knowledge that has resulted from their experiences of conflict. "My personality has changed" says Colin. But at the same time, change is never a total change of attitude to self or a change of base in life. The two channels of direction - a specific career and a specific home life - remain constant, and in this sense, limited. Security frees within limits.

It may be possible to break the cycle, as Carol's and Pam's thoughts about the future suggest. Pam considers change in the event of having children, and Carol considers changes of career and home life when her children leave home. The influence of children, the assumption and experience of motherhood are significant elements of conflict and change in many of the following cycles explored of female experience.

Group B : Steve, Jenny, Meg, Bob, Bill, Peter, Nina

As the most numerous group of those suggested, the participants of Group B all show some similarity with Group A, but with an important difference. While each enjoys occupations and careers which bring satisfaction and success, satisfaction rarely appears total or complete. Each speaks of experiences of dissatisfaction, suggesting an attitude and experience of 'compromise' - that is a compromise in expectations and/or achievement of them. The forms of this compromise are the forms

of the experience and process of each, and, as the following introductions suggest, are both numerous and complex.

Steve: "For a long time the problem was not knowing what I wanted to do ... I realise now there is no such thing as the perfect career and that I can never contribute something lasting ... it's delightful I can find something to be committed to ... it had better be the right thing for a while ... I wish I could accept that I am what I am and not worry so much about being perfect."

Jenny: I don't want to stay where I am ... I want to achieve more but I keep seeing things coming in the way ... sometimes I feel I've achieved what I have because of my mother ... whether it's my capabilities or not I don't know."

Bob: "I felt very contented until last September but the more I get into (studying) it, the worse I feel about it ... I see a contradiction between my ideals and my realisation of them ... I really thought I was getting somewhere ... but changing things slowly isn't fast enough."

Meg: "My life was really family and I loved being at home ... I never envisaged myself ever wanting a career ... I didn't want to accept my husband's absence but it's a financial necessity ... I dread going home to an empty house ... now I feel I'm two separate personalities ... don't you think life is a compromise?"

Bill: "We have material luxury but we still haven't total control over our own lives ... pressure at work from an inappropriate management style which is supposed to be supportive but isn't ... pressures from above in the system and controlling the decision-making ... a source of frustration and alienation ... I don't see any outlets for changing direction ..."

Peter: "I know my skill is in doing what I know I can do ... but will the company be prepared to have me doing the same thing all my life ... the problem is quite indicative of a desire for no change ... I need to balance self-discipline with spontaneity."

Nina: "Don't you think that's what life is about, working for gold, perhaps not achieving everything, going off at a tangent."

The implied and stated 'but' is a key defining characteristic, heralding an attitude and an experience of self which declares "I can and I am, but ..."

The 'but' may be a sign of dissatisfaction with self, leading to a statement of uncertainty or denial of personal ability to achieve expectations; it may be a dissatisfaction with circumstances, focussing on the greater power and inevitability of influences outside self, which are viewed as the causes of dissatisfaction. For the most part, dissatisfaction is accepted and projected as a combination of both self and circumstances, and acknowledges two important experiences - firstly, the experience of frustrated needs, goals, expectations; and secondly the experience of change in self, in ideals and expectations of fulfilment. The two elements of attitude which distinguish this group from Group A are (i) the greater acknowledgement of frustration, as lack of fulfilment, and (ii) the greater acknowledgement of change and compromise.

The central process of self-realisation expressed by Group B is a process, not as Group A, of a progression from success to success, but of an interaction of success, conflict and change. It is a process in which conflict between thoughts, feelings, and actions is accepted as part, though not the total, of life. As the accounts of the group suggest, present experiences may reflect a pattern of the past and an awareness of a life progression from change to change. The key to the understanding and interpretation of this process lies in the participants' accounts of conflict; it may be significant that each conflict is associated with an awareness of a decision made, or to be made, and with changes both in attitude and in circumstances. The following summaries outline the elements and different forms of this process, which appears in three different 'life-positions' :

1. During the early stages of the establishment of a career (Steve), or of both career and home (Jenny)
2. During a change of occupation (Bob), or a period of change in both occupation and home life (Nina, Meg)
3. During a restructuring of role, imposed by organisational changes, in an established career (Bill, Peter)

These positions differ from those of Group A, in which both bases, of occupation and home, are viewed as secure and unlikely to change in the immediate future. It is worth noting that the 'home' context and events at home are viewed and presented as significant to the accounts of the women of this grouping, while 'work' remains the central focus of attention for the men.

Success, Frustration, Conflict and Change

1. During the establishment of a career and home

Steve, in his early thirties, recently qualified in law, after spending some years, he says, "just pottering around". Steve feels satisfaction and a sense of success now in having fulfilled a life-long ambition to qualify in a profession, and to find that the role of the lawyer is both challenging and rewarding. "Much of the enjoyment comes from the impersonal side of it" he says, referring to his role in court, and speaks of the satisfaction of "getting the right answers", and making a social contribution. At the same time, Steve feels a conflict between his aims for perfection and his ability to always achieve "the right answer". Unable to resolve it, he accepts his anxiety, feeling that only time and experience can bring the fulfilment he seeks. Steve compromises in his expectations of success. His attitude reflects his experiences of the past, in which he once sought, without success for the career that was "beyond reproach", - a conflict he only resolved by modifying and changing his expectations. Hoping at one time that a career in the church might fulfil his needs, Steve recognised a conflicting doubt in his commitment, although he was

"desperate for something to believe in". Now, he realises his changed attitude - "I've come to realise the church isn't the only thing in life" he says.

Steve jokes that his choice of occupation "had better be the right thing" for a while, but recognises that once he has successfully mastered the knowledge and skills it requires, he will need a new challenge and seek a development of role within it, or a change of occupation. Steve has not experienced and does not expect "perfection", or total fulfilment in life; he speaks of a continuing need to establish what is most important to him, and of the confidence he still seeks to develop in himself and his abilities. But he has established a professional and a social identity within which and from which he can continue to develop his knowledge of himself and his active participation in the world, through his career. The satisfaction he experiences in his work and his marriage play an important part in helping him to do this, and Steve says "I would be sorry if the happiness in my marriage didn't rub off into the rest of my life". The stress and frustrations of his work are set against a perspective of development in his skills, values and interests, and of stability, and pleasure and contentment in his life at home. Dissatisfaction and conflict appear as integral parts of this process since his childhood - when he realised that he was "desperate to leave" the mining community he was brought up in.

Jenny, aged twenty, is the youngest of the participants. Shortly to be married, and in the process of making a 'sideways' move in her work as a nursery nurse, she, like Steve, is establishing both the economic and idealistic bases of her adult life. She too experiences both success and dissatisfaction in her work, and suggests that these are part of a wwider process of personal development, through conflict and change.

Jenny's satisfaction derives in part from her sense of achievement, and her feeling of being needed and accepted by the children in her work

in the nursery. "It's a feeling of being needed and helping the children to do something" she says. But it is also derived in part from her pride at successfully winning through conflicts of the past. Like Steve, Jenny is delighted to find a job she has both the commitment and the ability to do. While it is important to Steve to feel that he has achieved the status of a profession, as the son of a miner, it is important to Jenny to feel that she has survived the ups and downs of her school days and her training. She remembers her disinterest at school and the words of her headmistress who "told me that I was no good and would never achieve anything", says Jenny. Accepting a need to change and modify her behaviour then, Jenny went on to gain her 'O' Level exams, and to train as a nursery nurse, which she says at first she "hated" - "but then, after coming to terms with it I did stay and enjoy the rest of the course".

Now, like Steve, Jenny experiences new conflicts. She has developed sufficient confidence in her abilities to wish for greater authority, status and promotion in her work, but not enough to decide whether her goals are attainable. She seeks to broaden her experience by changing to a different nursery, but hesitates in accepting the appointment, feeling a conflict in her priorities and loyalties. Trying to make her decision, Jenny cannot decide what is most important for her to do - to change and leave her present dissatisfactions behind her, or to stay and preserve the satisfactions and particularly the relationships she does value. Her indecision is heightened by the knowledge that her forthcoming marriage may interrupt her hopes for greater achievement in her career, should her husband wish for a family. She feels conflict not only within her work, but in integrating the base of her career with the base of her home life.

Jenny decides to make the move, and also marries during the time of the project. Changes in her circumstances and life-style are accompanied by a change of attitude and an apparent resolution of conflict.

No longer experiencing a dissatisfaction in her work, Jenny is less ambitious for promotion, and she also decides that her main hope for fulfilment will be through home, marriage and motherhood. She looks forward to the development of a new identity, based upon the satisfaction, the security and the support of her homelife and her relationship with her husband. Her life moves into a new 'phase'.

2. During a change of occupation or change in occupation and home life

While Steve and Jenny indicate two forms of the process and experience of "I am and I can, but" in the early stages of a career, Meg, Nina and Bob present the forms of a later stage and perspective, in which an established base of a job or home is uprooted or substantially modified and changed.

Bob, although younger than Steve, has been teaching for six years in a comprehensive school, after an early promotion to the post of Head of Science. Like Colin he suggests a natural identification with the role of the teacher - "You become the role and it becomes you" he says, and speaks of the ways in which he has been able to develop his interests and active involvement in education. He expresses his feeling of satisfaction and success in introducing new 'child-centred' teaching methods and approaches to his school, of his clear ambitions to achieve further promotion. And yet, this is only one part of his experience. Attending a full-time course away from his place of work, Bob realises such dissatisfaction and conflict that he decides he would rather do anything than return to his former post. He devalues his past achievements - "changing things slowly isn't enough" he says - feeling that he wasn't really, after all, fulfilling his ideals and aims. He seeks change in his work, realising a change in his attitude towards himself.

Although a seemingly sudden experience, prompted by both the nature of his studies and his physical detachment from his home and work, the conflict and wish for change that Bob now experiences reflects a pattern

of the past. Even at school he experienced conflict when he realised that he was not achieving his teaching ideals in practice; and although he sought a resolution by introducing new practices into the school, he still entertained plans of another form of solution - to leave the school behind him for a year at least by furthering his own education. Both dissatisfaction with his achievements at school and his hopes for further academic success prompted the initial change.

Now, whilst studying, Bob recognises and begins to resolve the conflict he feels in himself - he decides to modify his ideals and priorities, and to aim for a 'pastoral' post in education. But experiencing a practical difficulty in achieving such a post, he feels further conflict. Then, towards the end of the project, Bob finds a temporary although not finite solution. He successfully applies for a research post of a year's duration. He finds a new source of personal development in his research and writing activities, offering both hope for new directions in the future and the risk of no direction if, after a year, no further opportunities for employment are realised. Bob does not seem unduly worried by this. "I could commit myself to anything" he says. Like Steve, Bob's home life and marriage remains a constant and stable base of his life, suggesting a supportive background and a continuity through change.

Meg and Nina, both aged in their forties, firmly state their acceptance of life as a compromise. Each speaks with the hindsight of motherhood, and with an awareness of frustrated ideals: each accepts a need to modify earlier expectations of fulfilment and now seeks to establish a new direction and base in life through the development of a career outside the home. The 'but' in their perceptions reflects not only the dissatisfactions and conflicts inherent in adjusting to a changed lifestyle, but also the frustrations and disappointments of the past. The positive statement of self however remains, "I've always done what's been right

for me at the time" says Meg, and Nina says, "If I wasn't happy then I would do something about it".

Meg recently began full-time work again for the first time since bringing up her children, aged nineteen, eighteen and fifteen. She stresses that this is "because my family changed". her return to work is the action she takes to avoid the gap she sees appearing in her life, now that two of her children have left home. Still settling into her job, Meg's account is largely an account of the past - an account of the satisfactions, conflicts and changes experienced in the establishment and development of her identity as mother and wife. Meg anticipated and found fulfilment in the mothering and care of her children, which she was able to supplement with interests and activities outside the home. Dissatisfactions crept in when financial difficulties and her husband's needs prompted his absence from home during the week, and Meg eventually faced and accepted a crisis in her marraige. Although, through the crisis Meg came to accept her husband's absence, and to modify her expectations of satisfaction, conflict continued when her children also began to leave home and Meg decided to re-establish her career. She found little success in her applications, without the experience and skills to enable her to 'sell' herself in writing. "I tried all sorts of things but didn't get interviews" says Meg. "That was a conflict". Finally Meg found the opening she needed, and now, as an organiser of playgroups and childminding services she begins to develop new satisfactions and successes in recognising her abilities and finding them recognised. "I'm flattered to think that I can do it" she says.

Meg's family however still remains her first priority. She still needs them around her, and anticipates further conflict when her daughter also leaves home. While accepting that compromise and change is essential, Meg finds the process of redefining so strong an identity exhausting and lengthy. "I feel happy now to sit back and digest all this" she says.

Nina, a personnel officer in a large organisation, lays greater emphasis upon her satisfaction and success in her work. She also has three children who are now grown up, and first returned to full-time employment ten years ago. Nina is proud of her recent promotion to a post which no-one from her department has ever achieved before, and never a woman. "Perhaps I'm blowing my own trumpet but I must be able to sell myself or something" she says, accepting her success as the natural outcome of hard work, patience, and ability. Nina has no qualms about her ability to do her job well, and enjoys both the security and the scope of her employment. "There are plenty of opportuniteis for moves and transfers and no risks of security" she says. She chooses to get in to work early and to leave late, and to make her work the centre of her interests and activities.

But Nina's enjoyment in her work is accompanied by a sense of emptiness in her life outside work. She is in the process of moving house, having decided to separate from her husband.

She speaks of leisure activities now no longer pursued, and of her acceptance of loneliness. This is Nina's third marriage, and although her success in work has been realised her hopes for success in marriage were never achieved. Each time, conflict in her relationship with her husband led to change - but not to a loss of hope. But now Nina feels her attitude changing, and accepts she says that her hopes will never be fulfilled. "It must be me" she says.

Needless to say, compromise is followed by surprise and a re-emergence of hope. By the end of the project Nina finds her attitude changing again. She establishes a new relationship, in which, for the first time in her life, she feels acceptance. "I now believe in the perfect marriage" Nina declares. She looks forward to a new phase in her life, and to the integration of success in her work with satisfaction in her personal life.

3. During organisational changes imposed in an established career

Peter, a newspaper editor and journalist, and Bill, a local government officer, are also aged in their forties, presenting perhaps a male counterpart to the experiences of Meg and Nina. Each speaks of satisfaction, success and a sense of achievement in their work and occupies a position of managerial responsibility - the apparent basic elements of the 'success cycles' of Group A. But although work is viewed as rewarding, it is also limiting and constricting in ways that each feels little power or authority to change. At the time of the project, both Peter and Bill feel dissatisfaction at the actions of those they work for, and find conflict and a need for decision imposed upon them. The decision is a choice - whether to stay and accept that dissatisfaction will always be permanent, or to stay and fight the sources of dissatisfaction; or to leave the organisation. Each alternative demands change, either through action and/or a modification of expectations for fulfilment. Success may bring fulfilment, but it also brings values and expectations which cannot always be met and maintained in practice.

Peter realises and suggests that the simplicity of his life and his satisfaction until recently both in his work and his home life are in part the sources of his conflict. "I'm lucky to have it both at home and at work" he says, "the problem is quite indicative of a desire for no change". Having spent all of his working life as a journalist for the same publication, Peter speaks of his satisfaction in completing the task of producing a newspaper which he feels is of both a high standard and of social value. It is work for which Peter feels a natural aptitude and enjoys. Peter admits his contentment, which is disturbed only by the continuing conflict that he 'ought' to be less self-disciplined at times. It is a conflict Peter admits to and accepts, although it remains unresolved.

The conflict between his natural conservation and his feelings that

he ought to be more open to change is pin-pointed by the threat of changes in his role and responsibilities at work. These are changes that Peter resists, feeling that the publication he values and the tasks he enjoys are threatened by the changes. He does not share the sales-oriented values and managerial appraoch of his employers. The conflict first began to surface some years ago when the firm was 'taken over' by a 'large conglomerate'; it is now more apparent as Peter is asked to take on new responsibilities. Although he declares his wish never to become more like his employers or to change his values, Peter accepts the changes without fighting at any great length and to accept a compromise in his expectations of satisfaction. The resources which enable him to do this are first the wish not to jeopardise the home life he values, and to preserve the satisfactions he is able to in spite of change; and his ability to rationalise the changes, that they will after all be 'good for me'. In any event, Peter is aware of his antipathy to fighting.

Compromise does not bring total resolution, as Peter realises the further conflicts that may lay ahead for him if he continues to work for his organisation.

Bill expresses a strong base of social values in his life, which he has developed and maintained throughout many changes of occupation - from joining a co-operative community, to working as a bread roundsman, to teaching and youth work. The central sources of satisfaction in his work derive from his success in actively implementing those values. "In particular what is satisfying are the changes made by mutual discussion and agreement ... developing the omnibus together ... seeing the staff satisfied." Bill is aware of an ever-present conflict between his hopes and the authority he has to fulfil them. "If I want to integrate my values with the work, the system has got to change dramatically" he says, "too often I feel cast in a role which restricts, offers little opportunity for creativity and affords responsibility without authority".

Bill expresses his anger at changes in his role imposed by his employers without consultation, speaking of his sense of outrage and impotence. Like Peter, Bill feels unable to easily find another job which will support himself and his family. He too faces compromise, trying to decide to what extent he will accept the conduct of his employers as a reality that cannot be changed. In the event, Bill continues to feel, but to accept, his frustration. He still maintains he says "a dream of getting some consistent values right across the service" and feels that his only action can be to "plug away at the local scene hoping the effects will ripple out gradually to change structures".

Meanwhile, Bill continues to develop his interests in other directions, using his abilities for research and writing, establishing contacts with other organisations which might offer hopes of future employment. He refuses to accept a fatalistic attitude which accepts despair or inactivity, or to resign himself to frustration. He speaks of a previous experience in his life when "the base upon which I was living collapsed - it can be a shattering experience but then you find another base and set off again". Bill has both the will and the personal abilities to do so.

Success, Frustration, Conflict and Change : Summary

Conflict and decisions appear intermittently in the experiences presented by Group B. While each is at a stage of making a particular decision or adjusting to the new circumstances of a decision made, these rarely appear as isolated conflicts or 'cul-de-sacs'. Life is less a progression forward in one certain direction of success, but is an exploration through conflict, considering alternatives and modifying attitudes and actions. This is a process in which satisfaction and success play a vital part, and generate an attitude of "I am and I can". Success enables Bob for example to develop values, standards and expectations of achievement in his work; in doing so it gives rise to conflict, but also the ability to resolve it, at least temporarily.

But dissatisfaction is also experienced through the frustration of needs, goals and ideals. These frustrations are the source of conflict - a conflict between ideals, and the experience of their negation in practice. Frustration has many sources, but the resulting conflict appears to have a common contradiction between self experienced as successful, capable of achievement and fulfilment, and self experienced as unsuccessful. For example: Steve, Jenny and Bob all wish for greater satisfaction, believing in the possibility of greater success, but at the same time express doubt in their abilities to achieve it. Meg, Nina, Peter and Bill all wish for a greater fulfilment of ideals, while at the same time recognising the difficulty imposed by external constraints. The experience of conflict is founded in the experience of 'inability' and may also include the experience of 'uncertainty', not knowing what personal needs, goals and priorities are (as Steve, Jenny and Bob suggest).

Conflict is sometimes resolved, as for example when Bob finds a new job. When it is never fully resolved (as in the majority of instances) it is accepted and adjusted to. "Don't you think life is a compromise?" says Nina. Compromise involves the acceptance of an incomplete fulfilment and the modification of ideals - but does not lead to extreme change in either ideals or behaviour. The experience of self suggested is "I am and I can (but)". Some compromise of ideals, some limitations of self are accepted and recognised, some changes in behaviour are made - but the image of self remains predominantly positive.

Conflict is incorporated in the general direction of life, as loops of learning and some modification of ideals and behaviour.

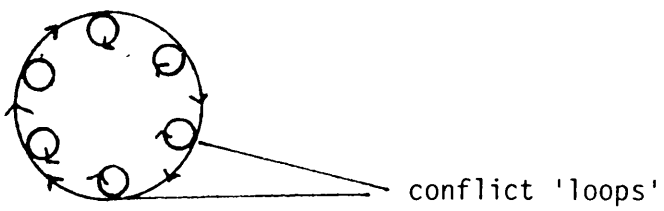


Figure 15

Certainty of direction and purpose appears less specific than in Group A. With the exception of Peter, purpose is less obviously congruent with a specific role, career or life-style. "It had better be the right thing for a while!" says Steve. Direction is suggested in the form of a code clearly developed values of behaviour in the account of Bill, and in a clear acknowledgement of personal needs and priorities, in the accounts of Meg and Peter.

Change and Development

"I always hope that you can be more than what's gone before" says Bill, "otherwise there's no point in life". In the concept of 'being more' Bill suggests a process of growth and change in his life which might equally be applied to each of Group B - a process of 'accumulation' of experience. This is less an accumulation of status and success in a particular career or an accumulation of security in a specific home and work context, as Group A, than an accumulation of learning about self.

This learning has two dimensions - the learning of what it is that self needs, and of the power or potential in self to achieve fulfilment of need. It is a process in which age and experience are significant. Steve and Jenny, in the early stages of establishing a career and/or home base, express wishes to develop this learning - "I wish I could accept what I am" say Steve and Jenny, "whether it's my capabilities or not I don't know". Bob, in the process of changing direction in his career, revises his perceptions of his potential to realise his ideals in his work as a teacher. Meg, Peter, Bill and Nina speak of firmly established needs and values, and of limitations to their potential to achieve fulfilment of them. Age and experience has brought awareness of this, and more specifically the awareness generated through the conflicts described in each.

While the experiences of Group A suggest a form of development which

strengthens some aspects while questioning and changing others. The determination to succeed continues while ideals, expectations of fulfilment and established bases at home and work are questioned and sometimes changed. Conflict plays a vital role in this process.

Group C : Alan, Tom and Mark

Alan, aged fifty-four, Tom, aged in his thirties, and Mark, aged forty-seven, speak like Group B of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction in their work. Fulfilment is defined, but not experienced as complete:

Alan, a lecturer, "I lead a very full life ... I like helping people and to feel involved ... but helping people has many conflicts, many problems .. I would like to feel that there is a vehicle by which one is fully integrated with the organisation.

Tom, also a lecturer, "I do feel fulfilled at times, producing things that have been useful to other people ... but that's not the whole picture ... providing that I am allowed to continue to pursue my own enquiries I shall be profoundly satisfied".

Mark, a manager in a counselling organisation, "I like to think on a good day that the job has done a lot to help me integrate my personality ... I always choose challenging jobs which I enjoy and then get myself into a circle of grind which I can't get out of".

This is however a different experience from the "I am and I can, but.." of Group B. An initially distinguishing feature is the strength of feeling expressed by Alan, Tom and Mark in relation to their successes and personal achievements in their work. Mark admits that he sometimes has little "emotional energy" left for his family and life outside work; all of the group express a strong emotional involvement in their work. This appears in two main forms - as a feeling of deep frustration of aim or need (which is accompanied by strong feelings towards significant others in the place of work), and as an unshakeable determination to

achieve personal aims and goals, notwithstanding frustration. Each of Group C suggests a duality of feeling, of frustration and determination.

A second distinguishing feature is the duration of both feelings. "I don't think my existence will ever have a resolution" says Tom, "... there will be certain contradictions which won't be resolved". Whether consciously or not, each rejects the experience of compromise described by the participants of Group B. Neither Alan nor Tom seek to change the nature or place of their work or their aims within it, in order to achieve resolution. Although Mark does change his job, he finds himself developing even stronger ambitions and expectations of fulfilment which conflict with the frustrations experienced in their achievement. Mark sees this as a pattern which has appeared throughout his career - a pattern in which he has always sought to fulfil his need for a 'challenging' job, in spite of the frustration and 'grind' which accompanies.

The emerging picture is one in which conflict and energy are inextricable. While in Group A, success in the achievement of aim and fulfilment of need gives energy, the will and the resources to continue to achieve success, in Group C the experience of frustration has a similar function. Each of the group describes frustrations which are sources not only of conflict but of energy. Energy is found through conflict and manifests itself as a continuing determination to achieve success and find fulfilment. Although this is never realised in practice and frustration continues, the capacity for action never dies. Conflict apparently strengthens the determination to achieve a specific goal, and to experience self as successful. "I'll never stop striving for recognition" says Alan, notwithstanding the frustrations he has experienced in the realisation of this aim.

Conflict appears as, and is recognised by each as, an integral part of life. But while in Group B conflict is associated with compromise

and change in expectations of success, in Group C compromise is less apparent. Aims and expectations grow stronger rather than grow less or become modified. There is an absence of the rationalisation of dissatisfaction and frustration which appears in the accounts of Group B, and which permits acceptance of failure and of limitations in the ability of self to achieve success. Conflict does not allow the individual to accept the limitations experienced in his own power to achieve his aims; instead, there is a strong reassertion of personal goals, verbally and in action. The experience of self which this suggests is less the "I am and I can but ..." of Group B, than a determined "I AM AND I CAN!"; a need to prove and to state the power of self emerges with and through experiences of conflict and frustration.

This is an experience in which contradiction is implied and expressed. There is an apparent central contradiction in the co-existence of both frustration and determination. From the circumstances of dissatisfaction, frustration and conflict each derives determination to achieve satisfaction, energy and a sense of purpose and direction. But with the pursuit of purpose, with the expression of determination and the acknowledgement of satisfaction and success, each is also aware of the circumstances and experiences in which success is denied, purpose questioned, and determination tested. Tom acknowledges this as a contradiction between the ideal and the actual - "There is a necessary contradiction in my life between what I think is possible and the circumstances in which I live" he says, and also suggests a contradiction he feels in himself, between his own needs and values. "I experience a contradiction between a need for acceptance and the value of relationships, and my own certain values of freedom, justice, right and wrong". Experience frustrates the integration and fulfilment of needs, but does not lessen Tom's determination to continue in pursuit of their fulfilment. Contradiction is accepted as 'necessary' and ideals and behaviours remain unchanged, in spite of

the experience of frustration.

The duality of feeling and experience of contradiction suggests an identity in which there is a dual experience of self: one, of self as failing to achieve success, of failing to fulfil needs, values aims; and one of self as successful and able to achieve fulfilment. The first image, although recognised through experiences of frustration, is never allowed to create any lasting doubt in the abilities of self to achieve success. Instead, the latter image is reasserted through the determined pursuit of aim in activities in which the statement "I AM AND I CAN" is expressed.

For example:

Alan, a lecturer, describes the fullness of his life and the satisfactions he experiences in his activities of research and writing, of 'pioneering' new courses at work, of lecturing to mature students "who see the relevance" he says. Satisfaction at work is supplemented by satisfaction in his many activities outside his place of work, which includes running his own company of associates, offering consultancy and advice on setting up in business and counselling on redundancy. Alan is proud of his success - "I am recognised, locally, nationally and internationally as a specialist in the education and general management of small businesses" he says. Alan is confident in his abilities to perform this role - "show them how it's really done" he says.

At the same time, Alan's satisfaction is marred by a deep and lasting frustration. Alan explains that while he has identified this as the ideal role for him, he is not recognised as such "as a college person". "They do not want to know" he says. He speaks of the experiences in which his hopes for recognition have been frustrated - "a feeling of being pushed out" when the centre he ran was closed "because one wasn't meeting the budgets"; the appointment of someone else in the role that he would like to play; finding his work for an exhibition 'pulled down';

his difficulty in gaining approval from his employers to develop his own role, and to take a sabbatical year in the third world - "a tragedy I feel personally" he says.

While these experiences cause Alan to ask "why are they getting in someone from outside when I have the experience to do it?", he remains determined to fulfil his aim and achieve recognition in his ideal role at work. "I have a need for people to see the link between education and the local chamber of commerce ... because of my connections ... but the college, because of their politics, do not see it that way" he says. Although he asks, "So what if the college do not want to recognise me", he is unable to accept this. "I make sure I do everything I want to" he says. Alan does not envisage a change of job - "I accept my place at the college" he says. He continues determinedly to achieve the recognition he seeks in as amny ways as he can, and speaks of a Christmas party he successfully organised for his department. "At last the college are beginning to recognise my strengths" he says. But although Alan asserts his strengths and his successes, the undercurrent of frustration continues as he realises the practical difficulties of achieving his aim. Alan expresses his sense of powerlessness - "I would like to know what is expected of me" he says, "I ask to whom am I responsible ... its people in their little boxes playing around in power politics ... everyone acting as individuals ... a colossal misunderstanding".

Tom, also a lecturer, speaks less of the satisfactions he experiences in his work, preferring to describe not only his work but his whole life, at home and in local politics, as an experience of contradiction rather than fulfilment. He describes his work as "paid labour", and explains the nature of his contradiction. "There is a total failure at the moment to integrate my humanistic values with my work, my political activity, and the community in which I live". Like Alan he experiences frustration in the practical achievement of his ideals; like Alan, he continues

to pursue these ideals within his place of work.

Tom describes his main aim at work: "Having demonstrated that the logical base of contemporary educational theory is unsound, my problem is to change the dominant view to a more acceptable alternative". This is an ideal which Tom feels can only be met by political change - "my research can be seen as providing support for those who argue that any integration (of individual and work), based on values of truth, justice, freedom and respect requires a transformation of the circumstances within which work takes place". Tom's conviction of the need for change in current educational theory and practice, his determination to be the agent of change, and his belief in the need for accompanying political change, are accompanied by the frustrations experienced in their realisation in practice. Like Alan, Tom experienced a lack of recognition for his achievements when his appointment to the permanent post of lecturer was first rejected by his employers. Now he continues to feel frustration of his values and his needs in his exclusion from the processes of decision-making in his department. "I'm not given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making - a crucial problem for me" says Tom. He speaks of "a violent anger against the people making decisions affecting my life" and of feelings of distrust which he sees as antipathetic to his ideals - but which he cannot help feeling.

Tom reasserts the success he is achieving. "I'm resolving it by getting together researchers who are interested in my educational view" he says. He speaks of the interest shown by educational bodies. "It was a great feeling that all those people who were at first hostile were beginning to accept" he says. Although he has times of doubt, "at times the structures dissolve" he says, he continues to maintain his ideals and his belief in his ability to achieve them - "again I find that I do come forward in action ... I will be successful" he says. With frustration and contradiction comes energy and determination, the reassertion

"I can and I am".

Mark presents a slightly different picture in that his goals and his ideals are associated less with success in a specific role or job; and the sources of frustration are as much associated with self, as with the actions and influence of others in his place of work. But Mark too suggests an identity and an experience of self in which ideals are frustrated and contradicted in practice, but continue to be held as sources of satisfaction, purpose and direction. Mark explains that since his youth he has felt himself searching to fulfil several needs - "a search for creativity, that is to be able to do things, and a search for closeness, that is to be able to understand, to experience and to express feelings". He also speaks of what he calls a "search for meaning", which reflects an interest in theology, and his previous occupation as a clergyman. He also speaks of his need to feel that he is doing his work thoroughly. "It's very important for me to know that I'm doing things thoroughly" he says, explaining the relation of this to his theological beliefs. "Judgement is all to do with doing things thoroughly" he says.

In his present job as a manager, Mark finds success and satisfaction in developing what he calls the 'ruthless' or 'assertive side' of himself, something he associates with a capacity for creativity. "The job has pushed me into growing" he says, speaking of the challenge it imposes of "having to remember to do so many things". At the same time, he expresses a sense of frustration, past and present. "I didn't work to capacity in early life" says Mark, "I left the church because I didn't think I had done the job terribly well ... I want to do everything thoroughly - I didn't do in early life but I realise I can only do one thing thoroughly". A sense of past failure strengthens Mark's resolve to achieve his aims, but he finds himself caught in an exhausting "circle of grind". "There's a real conflict" he says, "between life becoming a grind and how you get out of that grind". He also finds his need for 'closeness'

frustrated, describing his work as 'isolating' and explaining that he prefers to spend time at work than at home with his family, where he feels he would be bored.

But in spite of the grind, and in spite of the recognition of the limits of his energy and his abilities, Mark accepts and reasserts his need to take on a demanding job. "It's like an obsession without understanding it" he says, I've modelled myself on my father, a G.P., who worked all the hours that God sent." In spite of his acknowledgement that he cannot do everything thoroughly, Mark adds to his activities by undertaking part-time studies at university. "Up to now I haven't been very scholarly" he says, "but my ambition would be to get a degree if I can."

Determination, Frustration and Conflict: A Summary

Each of Group C suggests a strong individual identity, based upon the persistent belief in an active pursuit of self-set goals and ideals. Determination is the most significant characteristic of this identity - determination to achieve these goals, notwithstanding experiences of frustration and conflict.

This is a process which involves two experiences of self. The dominant and accepted image is the image of success, certainty of aim and direction. The second image, of dissatisfaction and frustration, may question the former - but in doing so gives energy and strength to it. Awareness of frustration may alert the individual to a contradiction in self, but the contradiction remains unresolved while goals, ideals and behaviours are unchanged. The process may be drawn such:

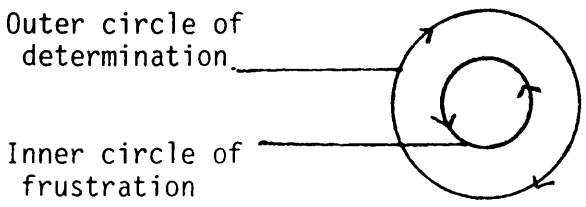


Figure 16

The process suggests a more or less permanent state of conflict between ideals and the active realisation of them. The conflict is pinpointed in the experience of the individual by the recognition of feelings for example such as anger (Tom), exhaustion (Mark), disappointment (Alan) - feelings which reflect frustration of ideals.

There are several elements which may contribute both to the experience and to the persistence of conflict. Each of Group C suggests the weight of an earlier experience of rejection in their lives. For Alan, the closure of the small business course was not the first; it followed the earlier experience of redundancy which he describes as "a black period", and one which turned his hair white.

A more continuous state of conflict is suggested than in the cycle of Group B. Conflict continues in the contradiction experienced between ideals and the realisation of them and there is little suggestion of an acceptance of compromise, of a need to modify ideals or the direction chosen for their achievement. Thus although experiences of frustration may imply a limitation in the power of self, such an implication is rejected and the successful self-image is reasserted with energy.

This energy is apparent in the many activities each follows inside and outside work - Tom with his interest in local politics, Alan running his own consultancy service, and both Alan and Mark participating in the work of the church.

Frustration is expressed in relation to a specific experience or experiences of rejection, either at work (Alan and Tom), or in childhood (Mark). Frustration continues, to be associated with a position of political powerlessness and the possession of inadequate authority to achieve personal ideals. Tom speaks of his exclusion from the processes of decision-making, and Alan experiences difficulty in gaining the support and authorisation of his organisation for his projects. Mark also speaks of influence exerted by his predecessor in the post, and of the restrictions

imposed by the other upon the development of his role and his activities.

Change and Development

While determination persists to fulfil a specific role and to achieve specific goals, there is little apparent change in either ideals or behaviours. Nevertheless, Mark, changing his job, expresses his feeling of 'growing' and of developing his capacity of 'assertiveness'. Tom too expresses a sense of movement - "it's simply a case of building and constructing" he says, "always aware that there will be certain contradictions which will never be resolved".

Although the structure of the cycle remains unchanged, as a continuing experience of contradiction and conflict, the energy generated within it is experienced by the individual as the active and constructive development of self. With determination comes energy - hope and a purpose in the hope of success in the achievement of ideals, and a capacity for action. In the employment of this capacity, in the active pursuit of aims and interests, there is a recognition and an acceptance of self as constructuve and having the potential for growth. A need to be able to recognise these qualities in self, to see self as active and achieving, is a central and vital characteristic of the process of "I AM AND I CAN" which has been suggested.

Group D : Sue, Rose, Dave and Linda

The initial, distinguishing element of Group D is the extent to which dissatisfaction dominates their experiences.

Rose: "I can't say where the satisfaction lies in either job or home".

Sue: "Why am I so discontent?"

Dave: "I don't know whether I'll ever come to terms with my job ... I've never succeeded in offices".

Linda: "I can't think what else I'd do ... every time I try something I haven't made it".

This is the contrary of Group A, suggesting a prevailing sense of

personal frustration rather than success. Unlike Group C, frustration is not related to the difficulty experienced in realising a clearly defined ideal; instead it is accompanied by an uncertainty of aims and abilities.

Uncertainty is expressed in many ways. Rose speaks of her uncertainty about the future - "How much longer is this going to go on" she asks. She is uncertain of the causes of her dissatisfaction. "What do I want ... why should I want more anyway?" she asks, and is unable to decide "where do I fit?". Dave doubts his ability to achieve satisfaction and come to terms with his job; Linda is uncertain what she can do that will bring her success.

A consequence of these uncertainties is a sense of immobility, an inability to take action that will bring satisfaction. "I feel as if I'm sitting here waiting to see what is going to happen to me" says Rose. Sue describes a sense of a "holding-down force", like concrete or mud around her feet, and her feeling of "being trapped". Dave finds it difficult to summon the effort and the energy for action. "I don't even try" he says, "I haven't the staying power".

Together frustration, uncertainty and immobility suggest an experience of conflict, in which change is desired but eluded by the absence of resources to achieve it. There is no obvious sense of purpose or direction, expressed by the affirmation of aim and pursuit of a particular role or identity. Rather, there is a sense of bewilderment and an experience of self which asks "Am I? Can I?". Two different forms of this are suggested: (i) the experiences of Rose and Sue, in which aims, identity and direction were once established but have grown less certain and open to question over time, and (ii) the experiences of Dave and Linda in which there has been no apparent establishment, or no conscious establishment of such.

In each case this is a process encompassing the breadth of the life

of the individual, life at home as well as work outside the home. For Sue and Rose the initial establishment of identity and direction was made through life in the home, where hopes for fulfilment were established in the role and occupation of mother. Subsequent dissatisfactions in this role and in occupations also pursued outside the home all contribute to the weakening of direction and experience of uncertainty. For Linda and Dave, not assuming such an identity in the home, the difficulty experienced in establishing self in a satisfying role and occupation outside the home plays a major part in creating and prolonging uncertainty of direction.

Like Group C, this is an experience of contradiction, in which frustration denies the fulfilment of need, but the need for fulfilment and satisfaction continues. In Group C, the contradiction is recognised and accepted as part of life; it does not deter the individual from defining and pursuing aims and interests. In Group D, contradiction brings uncertainty and hesitation; each finds it difficult to decide and to define aims, and may feel a contradiction in attitude towards their own needs, values and behaviour. The most striking example of this is the guilt expressed by Sue and Rose at spending time away from their home and children - a feeling which contradicts the simultaneous desire for activity outside the home. Linda too, although she has no children of her own at present, considers the prospect of motherhood and expresses her ambiguous feelings about both her present occupation and having a family. Dave declares his wish for a job - "I know I can do and find satisfaction in", but also doubts that he can ever achieve this. The experience of contradiction in self lies at the heart of the conflict each describes, and at the root of the questions "Am I? Can I?"

Sue, aged thirty-two, is married and has three children aged ten, eight and three. Sue describes her two occupations - one as housewife and mother in the home, and the other, a part-time tapestry business of her

own. She explains that her tapestry work brings satisfaction and enjoyment in the stimulation, the feeling of creativity and the peacefulness that it brings, but that it is nevertheless "not a true job". "I feel I'm only dabbling" Sue says. Instead, Sue finds herself overwhelmed by a sense of depression, which centres around a feeling of being trapped in the role and identity she experiences at home, as "Mrs. J.". For some years Sue has felt a depression which she cannot understand or shed.

Sue remembers that this was not always so. "The role of housewife and mother was something I accepted and enjoyed ... as babies the children were very dependent on me and I found satisfaction in that ... but after seven years a conflict was becoming clear between the 'me' I wanted to be and express myself as, and the 'person' who was by now automatically doing the housework and being around with my family ... I was becoming a cabbage at home ... I felt like a square peg in a round hole ... I could not find where I fitted with all the family".

Sue suggests the sources of her dissatisfaction: the tedium and boredom of the mechanical chores of the house, her need for the company and the conversation of other adults, and her sense of having more love to give than her husband needed. Sue experienced frustration of her needs for intellectual stimulation, for social contact and for the expression of love in her marriage - but although aware of this, finds herself unable to resolve her dissatisfaction. For Sue also values her role and identity in the home, and hestiates in taking steps to resolve her dissatisfaction, for fear of losing the love and security that she does experience.

"I feel I can't shed the responsibility without damaging my relationship with my husband ... I do not feel able to do as much of the job as I would like to ... I feel that I have to be at home as well ... I feel guilty and selfish at not being satisfied with a satisfying and possibly demanding role ... I did not want to own that I was resentful".

Bound by a role that she wants to accept and to find satisfaction in, but cannot, Sue asks "Where do I fit with all the family?". She speaks of the feelings of "I don't count" which accompany her responsibilities in the home - feelings she finds difficult to shed, and actively discourage her from asserting herself and seeking fulfilment of her needs in other directions. While Sue maintains this ideal, her conflict continues.

Rose, also a mother with two young children, experiences a simialr conflict which traps her with a sense of uncertainty and hesitation in taking action. "How long is this going to go on?" Rose asks, "it's dragged on for more than ten eyars now". Rose too recognises her dissatisfactions in the role of housewife and mother, and finds herself bound by the love and responsibility she feels for her family. "This thing that you should spend all your time with your children is still a conflict" she says, reiterating her responsibiltiy towards her children. "My first priority is the children".

Rose explains that she too had once hoped for and anticipated satisfaction in the role of housewife at home, but found herself trapped and constricted by it. She sought to continue her career as a nursery teacher, working in a part-time capacity, but found that this brought little satisfaction either at work or at home. Rose found her own job taking second place to the needs of her children, and to her husband's career, and speaks of the moves that have interrupted the development of her career. "I've chopped and changed all the way along the line - I've found that very unsatisfying" she says, "I feel I'm no further ahead than when I started ... that's another thing about being number two in the relationship as far as the job is concerned ... I've found that very hard to accept at times". Rose tries but cannot fully accept her role at home; but partial acceptance prevents her from finding satisfaction in her career.

At the time of the project, Rose has the opportunity to think about

and to plan a different career. An Australian, she is in England for a year with her husband and children and can think of a fresh start when she returns home. But Rose hesitates in making any plans - "I feel I'm sitting waiting to see what is going to happen to me ... I don't know what's in it for my husband". Rose's dissatisfaction at home has culminated in uncertainty in her marriage, and Rose, depending upon her husband's decision about their future, is unable to take any action herself. Like Sue, Rose is bound by her feelings for her family, and her dependence upon an identity she has maintained, however unsatisfying, for some years. It is a pattern of conflict which apparently only her husband's action can break.

Linda, in her twenties, is married and works full-time as a legal secretary. Linda is less emphatic about her dissatisfaction. "I haven't got anything against secretarial work" she says, but suggests that she too experiences a sense of frustration coupled with uncertainty and hesitation in resolving it. "I hate feeling safe ... I don't like being stuck in one place ... I would like to get a bit further but I can't think what else I would do", she says. Linda explains, "Half of me wants to be at work, and half wants to be at home ... that's another conflict ... I don't know whether I would like being stuck at home with a baby".

The key element of Linda's conflict appears to be the lack of positive satisfactions and success upon which she can formulate her ideals and hopes for future fulfilment, either through a career or through her life at home. "Every time I try something I haven't made it" says Linda, remembering her earlier unsuccessful hopes to qualify as a textile designer, being rejected after her foundation year by the college of her choice. She speaks of her subsequent but again unsuccessful attempt to begin a career in teaching, which she explains "showed up my faults". Linda recognises the extent to which her personal life has taken priority, when she chose an art college that would enable her to be close to her

boyfriend. Now married, Linda suggests the limitations that this has posed upon her career - "In the last five years things have changed a lot ... before that I could do jobs in different situations and move around" she says. But even Linda's personal life brings little apparent satisfaction, as she speaks of watching the television "too much", of no longer taking part in the amateur dramatics she once enjoyed, of not employing and enjoying her artistic skills even at a 'hobby level'.

Sacrificing her need for a career to her need for personal relationship and marriage, Linda now finds no clear base of satisfaction upon which to plan any definite direction for the future. She hesitates in seeking any new such direction, maintaining an ambiguity in the strength of her feelings and in her desire for change - and suggesting a resignation to her life as it is.

Dave works as a shipping clerk. He is emphatic about the frustrations he experiences in his job. "The job is destroying me but it is bringing in money ... it's pretty dead end ... consultation is at a minimum ... there isn't enough of the job I was taken on to do ... there's always someone looking for mistakes" he says. Dave finds his relationship with his boss difficult but recognises "the relationship needs to work for me to continue working in that office". Dave also suggests the frustration of earning less than his wife. "It downgrades my feelings of myself" he says.

Dave expresses his need to find a job that offers responsibility, "a reasonable wage", and in which he feels that the work he is doing is worthwhile and appreciated. But he also accepts that "I don't even try" he says, to find a more acceptable alternative. "There are barriers" he explains .. "I don't have a lot of confidence ... I've never succeeded in offices. My main conflict is in knowing how far I can push myself and what I can do". Dave is aware of a contradiction in himself. "I'm always trying to prove that I'm worth something" he says, and yet accepts

the image that he has of himself as lacking in abilities and confidence. "I'm the kind of person who relies on others for stimulus ... if it's bad I go backwards" he says.

Dave has two memories which strengthen this image of himself. One is that of his childhood. "I never pushed as a child" he says, remembering the feelings of distrust and suspicion he felt for other men when his father left him and his mother. He continues to doubt his ability to establish relationships with others. "I'll never come to terms with my job, or people for that matter". Dave is also aware that he "walked out" of his last job, and describes himself as "emotionally unstable". He suggests that the key to his conflict lies in the difficulty he has experienced in establishing relationships in his personal life. "My problem has been in finding a firm base on which to build ... marriage has only provided a few clues" he says, but feels that he is beginning to find some answers to his problems in relationships in his personal life which build up "a situation of trust".

Dave too apparently accepts the difficulty of making any change in his life. "Once I've set a way of doing things that seems to work I find it difficult to change" he says. Although he feels that his job is destroying him, he accepts that his own attitude contributes to this. "I'm quite self-destructive" he says. Like Sue and Rose, Dave is bound by an image of himself, an identity which in itself denies the facility for assertion and change.

Frustration and Conflict: A Summary

Each of the group suggests an identity in which both aims and values are questioned, and abilities to achieve fulfilment are doubted. The experience of self is "Am I? Can I?" Two different forms of this process are suggested; in each case, the prevalence of experiences of dissatisfaction and the frustration of needs and goals leads to the experience of contradiction in self, and to a conflict which continues without

resolution.

The experiences of Sue and Rose suggest a process in which the assumption of a specific identity, of wife and mother, brings values and ideals in which the fulfilment of personal needs takes second place to the needs of husband and children. Conflict occurs when the activities and the relationships of this role bring inadequate fulfilment, but the responsibility accepted and the need for love and security bind the individual to it. It becomes a self-enclosing process, in which the capacity to establish new sources of satisfaction and to broaden and develop the image of self is weakened. The process might be shown as such:

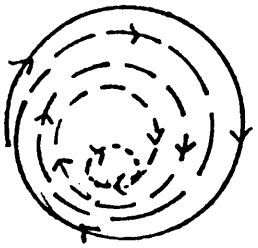


Figure 17a

When does the circle develop in outward direction again? Sue decides that little can be done until her children are older. "We'll wait until the children are older" she says, "and then we will be able to satisfy our needs together or apart", referring to herself and her husband. Rose waits to see what her husband will decide to do - his action may lead to a change in her marriage, and to the establishment of a new pattern.

The experiences of Dave and Linda suggest a process in which the practical and emotional bases for the development of fulfilment are never firmly established. Conflict is experienced when dissatisfaction is felt with life as it is, but uncertainty of direction and goals, and lack of confidence in the ability of self to achieve fulfilment, deter the individual from action. The process might be drawn thus: (see over)

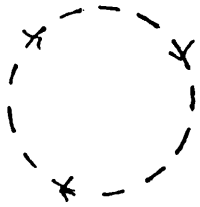


Figure 17b

The urgency for change is less than expressed by Sue and Rose. Dave says "I don't even try" and Linda says, "I haven't got anything against secretarial work", referring to her dissatisfaction in her job.

In both cycles, conflict appears to be self-perpetuating. Without a base of success or confidence in personal abilities, without an acknowledgement of personal needs, aims and goals, it is a difficult cycle to break. "I feel as if I'm stretched to the limit" says Sue. There is no energy to spare, no energy to put into a new direction. The image of self as 'unable', as not having the resources or the power to change the situation is accepted through force of circumstances. In the case of Sue the idea that she "ought not to matter", that "I don't count", suggests that self-effacement has become an ideal in itself.

Difficulty arises when this image, although accepted at one level, is also rejected and change and fulfilment are sought. The need to experience self as capable of achievement, as vital and active, persists.

The conflict cycles of Group D arise in contexts where dissatisfaction and frustration in personal relationships become inextricably linked with dissatisfactions at work, in occupations and activities outside the home. But while the pattern of these relationships and jobs are unchanged, while roles at home and at work continue to be held, there is no resolution - dissatisfaction in one sphere of life apparently reinforcing dissatisfaction in the other, each role constraining the development of the other.

Support too in such a situation is not easily found or recognised, in that those in whom support might be found are those implied in the

conflict. "I did not want to own that I was resentful" says Sue. Although dissatisfied, her need to preserve her relationships with her family prevent her from expressing her feelings, from seeking confrontation - and hence from finding support.

The one potential source of both support and development suggested is through contact and the development of new relationships outside work and home. Rose speaks of the importance of "social contact" to her; Sue speaks of the "ways out" where she can "spread my wings". Dave speaks of a relationship he feels is helping him. But the development of both relationships and activities is inhibited by guilt, and a contrary wish not to relinquish the role accepted at home, in the cases of both Sue and Rose. "My first priority is the children" says Rose. Linda has no energy to extend her life and her activities, and speaks of the drama activities she once enjoyed but has given up, of "too much" television in her life at home.

Change and Development

Sue and Rose both experience cycles of change - of a progressive accumulation and growth of dissatisfaction in their lives over a number of years. The change is one of a developing awareness of the limitations of self and of the personal ability to achieve fulfilment, an awareness of the limitations of life. But it is a form of learning unaccompanied by practical and active change - the learning has the effect of inhibiting the capacity for developing new directions in life.

A similar process takes place in the lives of Dave and Linda, though there is less a growing awareness of the limitations of life than a constant reinforcement of the image of self as failing to be successful.

Stage (5):2.The Emergence of a General Theory

In this section I shall describe the emerging theory of redevelopment through:

1. A summary of the typologies
2. The interpretation of an underlying and general process
3. The implications for a definition of 'growth'

2.1 The typologies summarised

In the foregoing section, four different forms of personal experience have been described. Each suggests a specific form of 'integration' of individual and occupation, which may or may not include occupations and activities within the home and community. Each describes a process of the continuing realisation of the potential of self, of the development of identity, through experiences of satisfaction and fulfilment, dissatisfaction and conflict in adult life. Two themes appear throughout the descriptions of each process:

(i) The realisation of potential as a cycle of interaction between the experiences of success frustration and conflict in the life of the individual.

(ii) The realisation of potential as a state of self-awareness, as an attitude towards self.

Four different models are suggested, each integrating these two themes. The models are not intended to be finite statements about the identity of the participants, and present neither a total nor exclusive account of the individual. Rather, they represent four states of being suggested by the dominant attitudes and perceptions of each at the time of the project. Each model might be viewed as part of a life process; each representing a particular stage, though not necessarily age-related, of personal development; each representing a cycle within a cycle. What are the central characteristics of each?

Cycle A (Jane, Carol, Colin and Pam)

Cycle A is a 'success' cycle, experienced midway through a successful career, and in association with a secure and satisfying home-life in which relationships are established and enjoyed.

The dominant attitude expressed is one of self-confidence and clarity of direction in life - a clarity achieved through the knowledge and understanding of personal needs, of aims and goals, and of the manner in which these can be and are fulfilled. The realisation of self is an acknowledgement of the positive potential of self, and the self-experience suggested to be the feeling "I am and I can".

Success has two dimensions: the achievement and fulfilment of needs in activities and relationships, and the recognition and confirmation of this by others, for example through promotion.

Success seeks to perpetuate itself and frustrations are deliberately avoided, seen as "digging yourself into a hole in the ground" (Carol), or as a "cul-de-sac" (Jane). Avoidance is usually possible, with the personal abilities and the resources established through success. When frustration is unavoidable, it takes the form of a major crisis for both Jane and Colin, and arises in the experience of a major threat to personal values and ideals. Conflict arising from the experience is resolved, to add to the experience of success. "I feel I can cope with anything now" says Colin.

Cycle B (Steve, Jenny, Meg, Nina, Bob, Peter and Bill)

Cycle B is a cycle of change and compromise, experienced during a change in circumstances at work or in home life. Active change is accompanied by reflection upon and a review of personal achievements, needs, priorities and abilities. The acceptance of a need for change in expectations of fulfilment gives the characteristic attitude of 'compromise'.

The dominant expression is one of self-confidence and the experience of self, positive - but. Limitations in the ability of self to achieve fulfilment and success are experienced and acknowledged. Frustration, through not meeting personal standards, or finding fulfilment limited by the actions of others, accompanies success.

Frustration heralds conflict which may be resolved by active change or by acceptance of a need for compromise in expectations. The process suggested is one of success, frustration, conflict and compromise. One conflict may be followed by another, and the cycle involves turns in many directions, though a general direction is preserved, and success continues to be experienced, often with a promotion at work. "Working for gold, perhaps not achieving everything, going off at a tangent ... that's life isn't it?" says Nina.

Cycle C (Alan, Tom and Mark)

Cycle C is a cycle of both determination and frustration, experienced both midway through a specific occupation (Alan and Tom), and following a recent change of occupation (Mark).

The dominant attitude is one of determination to achieve specific ideals, of confidence in the ability of self to do this - but also of a deep sense of frsutration. The attitude is one of contradiction. The abilities of self to achieve success are asserted with a forceful statement, "I AM AND I CAN". "I make sure I do everything I want to do" says Alan. At the same time, frustration is expressed at a lack of political power to do this, and at the difficulties in achieving the recognition sought.

The cycle suggests two experiences of self - both as successful and potent, and as unable to achieve ideals in practice. Conflict between the two images continues while hopes and ideals are maintained but are also contradicted by experiences of dissatisfaction and frustration. There is little change or compromise of ideals, and action is directed by a continuing hope of fulfilment and success.

In two cases, frustration and conflict arise in the rejection of self for a particular job; Mark feels his needs for success, his 'searches' began in childhood after a rejection by his mother.

Cycle D (Sue, Rose, Dave and Linda)

Cycle D is a cycle of frustration and conflict, characterised by frustration accompanied by uncertainty of self and of abilities to achieve success and fulfilment. The cycle arises in, or perpetuates a process of, continuing frustration which has been felt for some years; it arises in circumstances where dissatisfaction at work and at home apparently reinforce each other and limit the capacity for change.

The dominant attitude is one of uncertainty and a sense of helplessness. "How much longer is this going to go on?" says Rose. The experience of self suggested is "Am I? Can I?", acknowledging the limitations of personal abilities rather than the positive aspects of self.

Conflict continues, without the resources of energy or confidence to make any active change in the pattern of life. Dissatisfaction is felt and the limitations of personal fulfilments acknowledged - but the wish for fulfilment and change continues. Frustration cannot be accepted as the only possible experience. Success, though not experienced, is sought.

Responsibility for children, relationships in personal life and roles at home are important elements of the "vicious circle" of conflict experienced.

2.2 The Interpretation of Process: Development as the Process of Success, Frustration, Conflict and Change

Striking differences appear between the experiences of Cycle A and D - Cycle A suggesting a self-perpetuating cycle of success, and Cycle D one of frustration. Each suggests a very different self-image, and a more extreme appreciation of self as with positive or negative, than the personal experience suggested by those characterised as Cycle B and C. The common process of identity which all four cycles are part of is essentially a dialectic of success and frustration.

Identity as dialectic of success and frustration

A first proposition of the theory is that success and frustration are two diametrically opposite experiences, each with different functions in the development of self and self-awareness. Success is defined as the fulfilment of needs, the achievement of goals, the integration of ideals with active experience. Success is experienced through for example promotion, or the feeling of getting somewhere" (Colin), or the development of new skills in self (Jane). Success involves an equilibrium between both personal ideals and personal abilities; and between the sum of this potential and the needs, opportunities, demands of the environment and of others.

Frustration in contrast is the dissatisfaction of experiencing need without fulfilment, goal without achievement, ideals not integrated into active experience. It is experienced for example as a feeling of "getting no further" in a career (Rose), of having more to give or express than is demanded (Sue), of failing to complete a training for a career (Linda). Frustration arises in an imbalance between personal ideals and abilities, or between personal potential and the potential of the environment.

A second proposition is that success facilitates the development of self-confidence and an image of a successful self which is accepted and enjoyed. Frustration in contrast generates an attitude of uncertainty and an image of self which is difficult to accept. In Cycle A for example, Pam expresses pride that she is "going up the ladder" and confidence that she will always be able to find satisfaction. "I'm a very simple person" she says. In Cycle D, Sue asks "Why am I so discontent?", and suggests an image of herself with "a small shrinking mind" - an image she would like to shed.

Cycles B and C suggest an experience combining these polarities. In Cycle B, frustration is realised but not to the extent that it ever becomes the total and only experience; the successful image of self

is modified to permit some acknowledgement of limitations. "I was too set in my ways" says Meg, looking back at her life, "but I've always done what's been right for me at the time". In Cycle C, experiences of frustration may be deeper, but the reassertion of self as successful is equally stronger, to the extent that failure is not accepted.

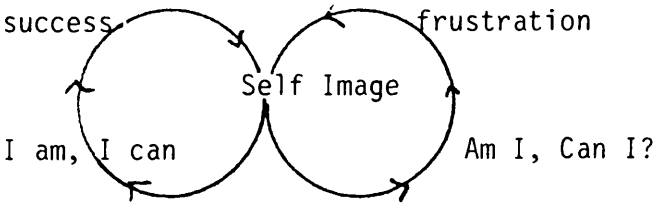


Figure 18

In the conceptual model suggested, Cycle A passes primarily through the success loop, while Cycle D passes primarily through the frustration loop. Cycles B and C experience frustration but avoid remaining within the loop of "Am I, Can I?"

These cycles highlight a basic need or tendency to experience self as successful and positive. The "tendency to completion" is suggested to be manifested in the need for success and fulfilment. Only in Cycle D is there any suggestion that hope of fulfilment is waning. "I don't even try" says Dave. A prolonged absence of success begins to deny the need for it.

Identity as dialectic of success and frustration : The role of conflict

Conflict appears in the cycles with two different functions:

i. As subordinate to success, and to the development of a positive identity

ii. As a reinforcement of frustration and contradiction in self.

Conflict and success:

In Cycles A and B, success gives birth to and helps to resolve conflict, or to facilitate the integration of it into the image of self. The central observation is that conflict in these instances is not a permanent state. Conflict is experienced as a process, moving from frustration through different 'stages' of reflection and action. For example,

when Bob feels a conflict in his work, his initial realisation of frustration, the failure to achieve his standards of success is followed by a clarification of his priorities, of what he really wants to do, and of his abilities, of what he can hope to achieve. Clarification is followed by a decision to effect a change in his life. He succeeds in making the change through his successful application for another job. The same stages can be observed in the conflicts experienced by others, and in some instances clarification is associated with confrontation in relationships - not only with self. Meg for example speaks of the crisis in her marriage which turned out to be a 'blessing'. A confrontation with her husband enabled her to make the decision to take action and try to resolve her frustration by taking a job outside the home.

The essential characteristics of conflict as a progression from frustration to success are first the acceptance of frustration, of a need for change; secondly, the clarification and confrontation of needs, priorities and abilities to achieve the fulfilment sought; and thirdly the effective activation of a decision which is compatible with personal needs, abilities and the opportunities offered by the environment.

The resources to do this are the resources of success: support from family and colleagues with whom relationships are enjoyed; and personal abilities for understanding and action.

The effect of the conflict upon the life of the individual is either to increase the sense of confidence in self, and/or to bring an awareness of limitations to fulfilment, and/or to suggest new directions for development. In each case, the positive image of self is maintained.

Conflict and frustration:

In Cycles C and D, the process of resolution is less apparent, and conflict takes a different form. It begins with the experience of frustration, but does not move beyond it. Conflict is felt less a series of decisions and action than as a continuing state of dissatisfaction,

uncertainty and contradiction.

In Cycle D for example, Rose asks "How much longer is this going to go on?" but is unable to find a way out herself. "I feel I'm sitting waiting to see what will happen to me" she says. Sue acknowledges the difficulty of clarifying her needs and priorities, and of confronting her feelings.

In Cycle D, Alan and Tom both feel frustration and clarify their aims, but are unable to either modify ideals or actions so that a resolution can be achieved. Mark does take action by changing his job, but finds himself still caught by a conflict between his ideals and his abilities to achieve them.

The conflicts experienced in these cycles become conflicts of identity, and a sense of contradiction in self. This contradiction is experienced as the continued hope for success and belief in self as capable of achievement, while events and circumstances may suggest the contrary. Ideals and active experience continue to contradict each other. Resolution is sought through the achievement of existing ideals and in existing roles, without a change of direction.

Identity as dialectic of success, frustration and conflict: the theory summarised

The theory from the foregoing is summarised as follows:

1. The process and personal experience of self-realisation involves the development of identity, of an awareness of self, through success, frustration and conflict.
2. The unifying principle of the process lies in the basic human need to experience self as positive, active, and potent - that is, able to achieve success, and capable of fulfilment.
3. Success and frustration are two polar experiences, generating different states of self-awareness.
4. Success, the fulfilment of needs, the achievement of goals, the inte-

gration of ideals with active experience, facilitates the development of self-confidence, an awareness of the positive potential of self, and a self-image which is accepted and enjoyed.

5. Frustration, the experience of need without fulfilment, goal without achievement, of ideals contradicted by active experience, suggests a questioning of the positive potential of self, and a self-image which is not easily accepted or enjoyed.
6. While success generates energy to continue to achieve success, frustration generates a desire for change, a desire to achieve success and to eliminate frustration.
7. Frustration leads to conflict between the ideal and the actual. The conflict may manifest itself as a 'process' in which the ideal and the actual are re-integrated into the experience of self; or may continue as a 'state' of frustration in which the ideal and the actual remain unintegrated.
8. Conflict becomes a process when frustration is acknowledged and a need for change is accepted; when personal potential, needs and the abilities to achieve fulfilment, are clarified, and action appropriate to both personal potential and circumstances is taken.
9. Conflict becomes a 'state' when frustration persists - either through insufficient clarification and confrontation of needs and abilities, through an unwillingness to accept a need for change, or through action inappropriate to personal potential and circumstances.
10. While success may generate frustration, in the generation of ideals that are unfulfilled in active experience, success may also give the resources to facilitate progression through conflict, to re-integrate ideals with the actual. (Cycles A and B).
11. The hope for success may prolong conflict when frustration is not accepted as a need for change in self, and ideals and behaviours are reasserted without compromise or change. (Cycle C)

12. When the total experience of the individual is one of frustration, the ability to make self-directed change is limited. (Cycle D)

2.3 The implications of the theory for a definition of 'growth'

As cycles of personal experience, of awareness and interaction, each represents a form of growth and learning through a combination of different aspects or dimensions of potential; and each also highlights a human quality or characteristic of growth.

Dimensions of Growth

Each cycle contains some learning and/or change, through the realisation of three central aspects of potential:

i. The dimension of perception

ii. The dimension of action

iii. The dimension of progression.

These are dimensions to which the experiences of success, frustration and conflict contribute in varying degrees; and are observed in varying form and degree of development in each cycle.

i. The dimension of perception

Three forms of perception appear in the cycles as characteristics of growth:

a. The development of clarity and understanding of personal needs, ideals, priorities, goals, values, and of

b. abilities and skills to meet these needs, both the extent and the limitations of ability.

c. The development of an appreciation of the depth and breadth of personal experience.

a. and b. are most evident in the 'success' cycles of Groups A and B, where the experiences of frustration and conflict add to the understanding of self acheived through the experiences of success. In Group C, needs and ideals are realised, though the extent and limitations of personal ability remain undefined.

c. is associated with the strength of feeling expressed by Groups C and D, where the experience of frustration and conflict illuminate the potential of self to feel and to endure discomfort, and sometimes despair. It is also associated with the elation expressed by Jane for example in Group A, in her realisation of the "absolutely superb period" she is currently experiencing in her life.

ii. The dimension of action

Two forms of action are highlighted by the cycles:

a. The development of the active and expressive potential of self in day to day life

b. The development of the capacity for active and self-directed change.

a. is associated with the capacity to put ideals into practice, to pursue goals, and to realise the potential of self through relationship and interaction with the environment. This may be in the form of the execution of tasks and employment of energy in practical activities, and in the form of the development of relationships. These capacities are suggested in the experiences of both success and conflict cycles, except that in the conflict cycle C greater emphasis is given to task directed activity, and relationships with some colleagues are sources of restriction; and in Cycle D, energy for developing new interests and activities is noticeably restricted.

b. is associated with the capacity to make decisions, to move from frustration to change and a new direction. It is most evident in the success cycles of Groups A and B, where conflict is a process leading to, for example, the successful change of occupation. It is least evident in the cycles of Groups C and D, where frustration persists as a 'state' of conflict in which there is no active change of circumstances or behaviours.

iii. The dimension of progression

The forms of progression are identified as:

a. Progression as an accumulation of capacities for perception and action

b. Progression as the capacity for change

c. Progression as the capacity to progress through and endure, experiences of frustration and conflict.

a. is associated with the development of success and achievement in a career, with the development of self-confidence, and personal skills and abilities. It is most apparent in the 'success' cycles of Groups A and B, with the continuing development of the capacity for achievement.

b., the capacity for change, is most apparent in the cycle of Group B, where compromise of ideals or change of occupation and circumstances may lead to a progression in a new direction which leads outwards, broadening perceptions and experiences.

c., the capacity to endure a state of frustration, suggests a form of progression quite different from the movement through stages of conflict. Progression as endurance is most evident in the conflict cycles of Groups C and D.

Characteristics of growth

The combined interaction of these dimensions in each cycle is summarised in the emergence of a central unifying characteristic.

In Cycle A, the characteristic suggested is that of clarity. Perceptions, actions and progressions emphasise the potential of the individual to develop a clear understanding of the nature of self - of needs, abilities and purpose. It is a characteristic associated with the ability to integrate ideals with practice, to avoid and overcome frustration and conflict.

In Cycle B, the characteristic suggested is that of flexibility. Perceptions, actions and progressions permit an openness to contradiction in self and in life, and an openness to change in ideals and patterns of life. It is a characteristic associated with the ability to accept

frustration and conflict as part of life, without giving up the hope of success and fulfilment, with the ability to continue to maintain energy and ideals while experiencing frustrations and setbacks.

In Cycle C, the characteristic suggested is that of persistence. Perceptions, actions and progressions are associated with the refusal to 'give up', with a capacity to maintain ideals and energy in times of frustration. It is a characteristic associated with resolution and determination to achieve aims, in spite of the contradiction felt in self.

In Cycle D, the characteristic suggested is that of endurance. This is not the same as the active and energetic persistence of Group C, but is a passive endurance of frustration and conflict. Perceptions and progressions are states of reflection rather than action. It is a characteristic associated with survival under long periods of stress, with the realisation of the negative as well as the positive potential of self.

Each of these characteristics illuminates an aspect of human potential realised through experiences of success, frustration and conflict. Each also suggests a characteristic of our capacity for survival, and for self-preservation and growth.

CHAPTER 5

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND PROJECT

Although the first project had proved fruitful, I decided to continue the empirical inquiry by undertaking a second piece of fieldwork, in order both to develop the conceptual quality of inquiry and extend the data base, and to improve the method that I had adopted.

In this chapter and the next I shall review the conceptual and methodological discoveries made in the first project, identifying the further questions that they posed and the areas for development in a second empirical project.

1. Review of the conceptual discoveries

In general the theory which is described in the preceding chapter points to not a 'divided' nature tending to 'wholeness' or to partiality and sickness, but a multi-varied nature and patterns of identity which were all in their own way growthful, and all in their own way deficient at the same time. Although the ideal state of absolute 'wholeness' is invariably associated with the personal experience of complete satisfaction, success and personal fulfilment, each of the experiential patterns detected illustrates a particular form of the part-whole dialectic, in which the growth process is mediated by individual capacities for perception, action and progression, and for clarity, flexibility, persistence and endurance.

The common dynamic principle of all individual patterns of development was found to be the persisting need to experience self as positive, successful and powerful - as 'I am and I can' - a need realised in practice through the satisfaction primarily of personal needs for achievement and for relationship.

Identity is defined as an experiential process of developing a self-image and self-awareness through the day to day experiences of

satisfaction/dissatisfaction, conflict, decision and change. The relationship between experiential pattern and self-image is apparently reciprocal and self-enforcing, the particular pattern of conflict and change supporting a self-image which in turn sustains that particular pattern. Four different patterns were discovered, each associated with a particular form of self-image, of 'I am and I can', and with a corresponding set of behaviours, and set in the context of the individual's particular needs.

The total conceptual schema (Figure 19) thus shows identity as a process of self-experience which has as its end the experience of a positive self-image, and is realised through the experiences of satisfaction and dissatisfaction and conflict in personal needs and potential. The capacity to learn from experience and to direct the course of our own development lies in our capacity to respond to dissatisfaction and conflict in the manner of our choosing, whether it is to avoid it, to live with it, to fight it, or to be submerged in it, and to make changes in our expectations (as in Cycle B) or to deliberately make changes in our home life, work, relationships and so on (as in all Cycles except Cycle D).

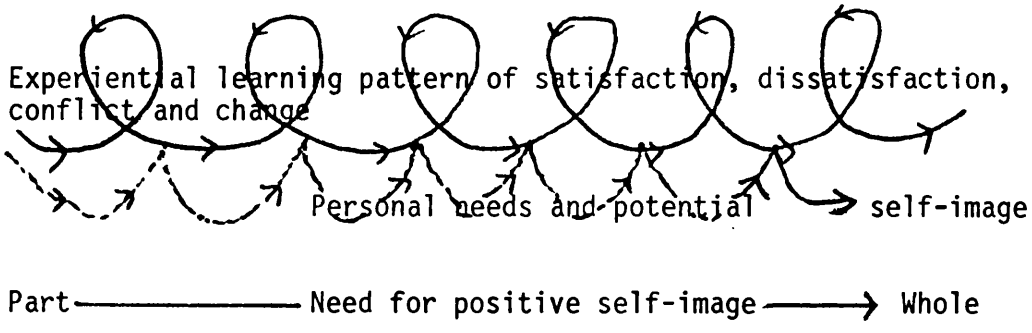


Figure 19

While the findings generally provided a detailed understanding of the nature of identity as dialectic of part and whole, there were however a number of unanswered questions which they posed about the nature of change, and the nature of identity as a dialectic of constancy

and change. It was these questions which prompted me to inquire further and to undertake a second empirical project.

2. The questions about change

There were in general two kinds of change which emerged in the findings of the first project: (i) the gradual process of enhancement of a particular identity, and (ii) the decisions and active changes which heralded the beginning and end of each experiential cycle. On the basis of these findings, it would seem that we each enjoy a primary experiential pattern which remains constant and is enhanced and strengthened through the decisions and active changes that we make in our lives - that we are in other words, usually an 'A', or a 'B' or a 'C' or a 'D' type of person, and that each experience of major conflict and change results in a resumption of our basic typical pattern.

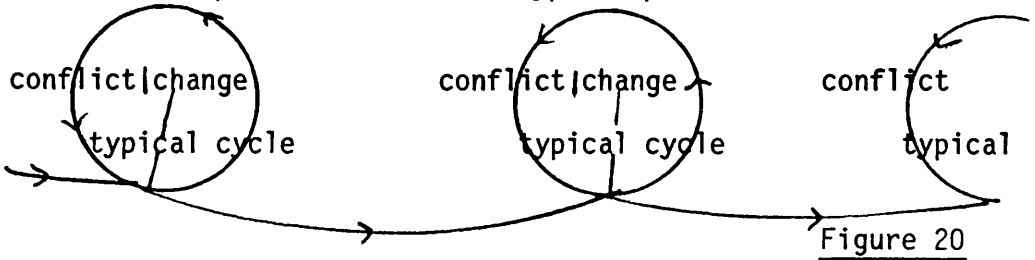


Figure 20

But there were practical and existential reasons why this was not a satisfactory conclusion to reach.

First, from a practical perspective, we had only explored in great detail the experiences of the last decade in each person's life, and I felt that further exploration of the more distant past would be required in the workshops rather than through interview and discussion to establish a sound and detailed enough experiential base for any theorising about life as a whole.

Secondly, from a more personal existential point of view, I found that I could not accept that we are bound to remain in one kind of pattern for the whole of our lives. I wanted to find out how we might change from one kind of self-image to another, from one experiential

pattern to another. Do we ever undergo a radical change of identity? Or indeed, ever manage to change the basic dynamic of the whole process, our need for a positive and powerful self-image?

I could not believe that anyone could sustain the positive success cycle for the whole of their lives. I did not want to believe that anyone might be condemned, as it were, to endure the depressed Cycle D for the whole of their lives. I wanted to understand how our potential for self-direction might be channelled into and realised in our capacity to move from one kind of cycle to another.

It was with these questions in mind that I decided to enter into a second inquiry, still resisting the apparent primacy of constancy in our lives and experiencing.

3. The questions about structure

In making the decision to take these ideas into a second project, a further problem emerged. This was the question of to what extent the findings from the first project might be taken as given and as generalisable to the point that they might determine the conceptual framework for exploration; or to what extent they might be tested and required verification in a second inquiry.

I decided that the optimum strategy would neither presume one nor the other of these options but would accept that the findings were potentially both generalisable and requiring further verification. I chose a strategy in which I adopted as given the basic phenomena of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, conflict and change - but in which the form of the experiential cycles was not presupposed. If the theory was sound as a general theory, they would emerge anyway in analysis, and if it was not then I would need anyway to develop a new theory which was congruent with the findings of the second project.

The second project would be both a detailed exploration of identity

development in the total life context of individual experience and auto-biographical experience; and a test of the generalisability of the conceptual framework for identity which has been proposed.

My next task was to consider the methodological framework and to identify the improvements in the method which might be integrated with a further inquiry.

CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPMENT OF THE METHODOLOGY

When it came to designing an empirical method of inquiry for the second project, there were a number of ways in which I chose to modify and develop the first model, to improve the quality of the empirical validity of inquiry. In this section I shall describe the modifications made for the second project, beginning with my learning from the first project and the new problems that this posed for design.

1. My learning from the first project

My initial feelings after the project were a combination of complete emotional exhaustion and hopes and ideas for further innovations.

On the face of it, things had gone pretty well. The participants had agreed to follow my conceptual schema for exploration and had shown considerable commitment to and interest in the inquiry, participating fully in the experiential and reflective exercises and in the feedback sessions, with minor exceptions. I found myself cast in the role of facilitator and scribe, assuming primary responsibility for the integration and development of theory, and taking little part in the experiencing - but this proved unavoidable in view of the size of the group, the time taken in simply managing and co-ordinating what was going on, and in view of the participants' own choice to leave the writing to me. Given the practical constraints, I was pleased with the outcome, and was satisfied that the emerging theory was grounded in individual experience and in interpretations which were agreed by the participants as acceptable intersubjective interpretations of their experience. There was only one disagreement, and although the participant agreed to write his own interpretation, sadly this did not materialise.

But at the same time, although I did not take part as such in the experiential explorations in self-discovery, and remained at some distance

from the participants as a result of this, I found that my own feelings were drawn more and more into the inquiry (see p.98 above). I found that I could not help this happening, and more than this, began to see the potential that I had to distort the findings and unilaterally direct the course of inquiry.

The worry that I might be distorting the findings was strengthened by the ease with which the participants seemed to see me as the expert and agreed with my interpretations. How authentic was their agreement? I had no way of knowing. Even though a shared or intersubjective interpretation was bound to include some of me in it, to be comprehendable to both the individual and to myself, I worried that there might be too much of me in it. When I wrote my own profile after the project and discovered the ways that I could relate the emerging theory and typologies to my own experience and character, the anxieties intensified.

What I learned from all of this was that I had fallen into a vicious circle of feeling subjectively involved in the inquiry, without the resources or means of really monitoring and countering this involvement, putting it to positive use rather than experiencing it as a threat to validity. I began to understand the logic of the co-operative, new paradigm models, and the interdependence of co-operation and participation and empirical validity. It became suddenly quite clear to me that the more the participants contributed to the inquiry, and the more they learned from it, the less would be the likelihood that I could introduce and sustain a personal bias, and the less would be the burden on me to manage it. It also became clear that no matter how convenient it might be to exclude oneself from the action of the inquiry, it is impossible in practice to do this. In order to improve the quality of empirical validity of inquiry I would need to develop (i) the participants' contribution, and (ii) ways of managing my own anxieties and involvement constructively. These were the two main areas for the

development of the design for the second project.

2. Developments in design: the participants' contribution

I could see a number of ways in which the quality if not the quantity of the participants' contribution might be improved, by taking measures to develop the learning climate and our respective roles and relationship and by introducing changes into the practical programme. My general objective was to foster the conditions and the procedures which would permit the greatest possible contribution by the participants to both the experiencing and reflection of the inquiry, and which would permit the greater integration of these aspects so that the final theory contained as much of the participants as was possible. The changes that I decided to make were as follows :

(a) A smaller group

Although this would have the effect of reducing the sampling range, I felt that it was absolutely essential to reduce the size of the group to a manageable number. To develop participants' involvement and to integrate interpretations in the context of the empirical inquiry itself would be impossible with a group of eighteen, likewise the development of a more intimate climate. Six or so seemed an ideal number.

(b) A balance of trusting and risking, and of effort and enjoyment.

In the first project I had found it difficult to gauge the best kind of facilitatory approach for everyone. Was it better to let people be, to listen rather than confront them, to assume that learning and accepting personal conflicts and contradictions came more readily in a supportive and more gentle climate? Or was it better to adopt a confronting attitude, asking participants to take part in things they found difficult and psychologically hazardous, adopting the philosophy that learning would be hard and distressing? My own anxieties about confrontation made this a difficult question to answer. How could a better

balance be achieved?

Following my own preference for a more gentle approach and in accordance with existing theories of group processes (Golembiewski and McConkie, 1975: 131-185) I decided that trustbuilding and enjoyment should come before risking and confrontation, and that the programme should facilitate a gradual movement towards this through the development of relationships within the group, and through planning a programme which might begin with the exploration of 'safer' areas of experience, for example descriptions of events, and move gradually into the exploration of more personal feelings and experiences, at the same time encouraging participants to confront and question each other, to help each other uncover the contradictions and conflicts in their experiences.

(c) Systematisation of learning

In the first project I had decided not to try to turn the inquiry into a systematic action - learning exercise, but saw it as a learning experience in more general terms. Feeling that it would be taking on a lot to combine the inquiry with specific individual learning objectives, this aspect had been set to one side. But I found in the course of the inquiry that each person had brought with them a hidden agenda, a reason for coming which only became apparent in the later stages. There was an untapped and unexplored potential for learning and development which encapsulated the meaning of the inquiry for the individual.

I decided to try to incorporate personal learning objectives into the second project, to develop an inquiry more closely related to current concerns, more along the lines of the 'action science' model. I aimed to introduce the question of personal aims and interests in taking part right from the start, and to monitor and check out with the participants throughout the inquiry what they felt they were learning and gaining from it.

(d) Greater flexibility for individuals

Although I had aimed in the first project to develop as flexible a programme as possible, I learned that even within the general programme there was a need for even greater flexibility for each individual. I found that each person had their own way of making a contribution - some through drawing, some through writing, some through talking, some preferring a large group, others a one-to-one context. If the maximum creativity of each was to be encouraged I would need to try to develop a totally flexible programme with complete freedom of choice for participants and a number of alternatives at each stage. I decided accordingly to leave the decisions about the course of the empirical inquiry, choice of activities, group arrangements and number of meetings to the group itself, while preparing a range of exercises that might be brought into play, depending upon the choices that were made.

(e) More emphasis on experiencing

Considering the kind of activities to incorporate into the programme I decided to try to improve the experiential quality of the exercises. In the first project, many of the activities were reflective in the sense of 'talking about' the past and present, rather than directly exploring feelings through for example role play or gestalt techniques. This was partly because I had felt hesitant about asking participants to undertake unfamiliar activities and partly because I was unsure how to integrate at a conceptual level the exploration of perhaps incidental issues in the present with the development of an autobiographical account.

I found however that these fears were to some extent unfounded. The participants were generally interested in trying things new; and I began to develop a conceptual model for interpretation where the exploration of present feelings helped to identify major life themes, and past experiences were interpreted as a function of present experiences and the individual's present self-image. The present provided the

starting point for interpreting memories of the past. In the second project I decided to try to introduce exercises of a more experiential nature in the sense of contacting feelings in the present.

(f) Greater integration of theory building

To try to eliminate the distinction between the experiencing as something the participants did, and conceptualisation as something I did, I decided to try to alternate concept building sessions with experiential sessions throughout the empirical inquiry, and to develop the interpretations on a more co-operative basis, building them up and identifying the main themes that were coming through, during the course of the workshops. To aid this process I decided to eliminate the production of a final 'description' for each individual before interpretations were developed, but instead to constantly feed back all recorded information for discussion in the next session, so that there was a constant process of interpretation throughout the empirical inquiry. The general aim of this was to eliminate the distinction between the action/experiencing and reflection stages which had been apparent in the first project, and to enable the participants to become more actively involved in their interpretation, and, in the sharing of views, in the development of a common theory.

(g) To actively encourage disagreement with me

To try to overcome the 'too easy' agreement experienced in the first project, I aimed right from the start to encourage the participants to disagree with and confront me whenever whatever I was saying made little sense in their own experience, to stress the importance of speaking out their views right from the start.

3. Developments in design: my own contribution - managing anxieties

Accepting that I was bound to become emotionally involved in the inquiry and that remaining at a distance from the participants only

intensified the problems associated with this, I could see several possible ways of improving the situation.

(a) Increased personal participation

I hoped that with a smaller group I would be able to take part equally with the other participants, and feel less alienated from them and from the action of inquiry.

(b) Recording personal feelings throughout

I hoped that developing a diary, recording the various personal conflicts, would be an important avenue for expression, and enable me to stand back from myself, assessing how they might be influencing my actions and choices in the inquiry.

(c) Deliberate action to confront the anxieties

I decided that one way of coping with the anxieties might be to act in contradiction to them, to deliberately do what I most feared.

(d) Joining a personal development group outside the inquiry

As advised by the new paradigm practitioners (Reason and Rowan, 1981b:246) I realised how helpful it would be to take part in a group outside the inquiry in a context of support where conflicts and anxieties might be explored and dealt with without prejudicing the inquiry. Although I had joined a co-counselling group during the first project I had not kept it up, not really appreciating how this might have helped me at the time. But at the same time that I conducted the second project, I joined a small women's self-help group, meeting at weekly intervals.

(e) Adopting the advice of Devereux (1967)

Setting out on the second project I was still unsure how successful these measures might prove to be in eliminating or at least minimising personal bias. Was there anything more tangible that might be done? At this point I read Devereux (1967) and was interested by his theory that our anxieties in the observer-observed context of inquiry, particularly the anxieties and subjectivity of the researcher as observer,

are the source of

> "the most significant and characteristic data of behavioural science research ... the royal road to an authentic, rather than fictitious objectivity." (p.xvi)

To Devereux, anxiety is not merely incidental and a potential threat to validity, but it is unavoidable and an essential condition of our existence. His theory is based upon the primacy of our defensive mechanism, and he takes the view that every thought system originates in the unconscious as a defence against anxiety (p.17).

The phenomena of the greatest implications for research are those of 'transference', but more especially, of 'counter transference', defined by Devereux as follows, in their psychoanalytic context

> (In transference)
> "The analysand having evolved characteristic reactions towards an emotionally significant person, tends - sometimes almost in a form of a repetitive compulsion - to react to the analyst as though he were that person, and sometimes does so by grossly distorting reality ...
>
> (In counter-transference)..
> "Countertransference is the sum total of those distortions in the psychoanalyst's perception of and reaction to his patient, which cause him to respond to his patient as though he were an early image and to act in the analytic situation in terms of his own - usually infantile - unconscious needs, wishes and fantasies." (pp. 41-43)

But while the transference tendencies of the analysand, or, in research, the subject, may be accepted and explored, Devereux notes that the researcher as observer characteristically avoids being observed in turn, and avoids looking at him/her self, and so falls into a vicious circle where anxieties and the distortions they produce go unrecognised.

The theory behind these phenomena is that we feel anxiety as a result of the 'partition' between ourselves and others, always experiencing an incompleteness in our communications, and seek to compensate for this by developing fantasies which decrease anxiety and become established as conscious cognitions, in adulthood often reverting to fantasies established in childhood. The potential for countertransference

is increased in behavioural science work by any number of stimulants of anxiety:

> "'the narcissism of small differences' (Freud) ... which induces one to construe unfamiliar beliefs and practices as criticisms of one's own and makes one react to them negatively ... Material which threatens the basic vulnerability of any human being ... exacerbates current problems ... disturbing 'over-communication' between the observer and observed ..." (pp.44-46)

and

> "the guilt from the feeling of 'sin' arising from the 'voyeuristic impulses' of the researcher, which, although characteristic, are not consciously accepted ..." (p.156)

or

> "oscillation between the conviction that only his self-model is universally valid and his fear that it may not be ..." (p.165)

The position may be complicated further by the researcher's inability to accept and cope with the subject's transference reaction to his/her age and efforts to manoeuvre him/her into a role suiting this (p.192), or by their attempts

> "to force him into the procrustean bed of an ascribed status, chosen in accordance with their needs". (p.234)

These influences may lead to any number of 'professional defences' associated with the countertransference resistances of the researcher, which are, says Devereux, simply varieties of the isolation defence which 'decontaminates' anxiety arousing material by repressing or negating its affective content, and human as well as personal relevance (p.83)

Such defences may lead the researcher to deny the self-relevance and empathetic understanding and identification with the subjects which is the very basis of his knowledge; to maintain a detached stance, increasing the "psychosocial gap between himself and his subject" (p.149); factual inaccuracies, exotic selectivity of data (p.205ff); to a 'rigid stick' methodology (p.282) which permits the subject little choice and ignores the researcher's own subjectivity; and to the statement "and this I perceive", in a context where the subject as perceived is permitted

to make statements which reflect his self-awareness and the effects of being observed, but the researcher only makes statements about his subject's statements (p.276).

The solution to these problems, the 'royal road' to objectivity, suggests Devereux, is not to deny these phenomena but to accept the value of empathetic understanding, to analyse the actual situation into which we are manoeuvred (p.248), and to exploit the situation constructively.

The example is set by psychoanalysis. Devereux describes (p.296ff) how in the psychoanalytic experiment the analyst attempts to inspect the disturbance created by the other in his own primary emotional processes the moment before the conscious cognitive and defensive response sets in, at the same time making contact with the unconscious of the other. This inspection is called 'insight' or 'self-awareness' (p.312), and enables the analyst to differentiate between the other's statement and his own, and to understand intelligibly his own fantasy about the other.

And although Devereux agrees that it would be arrogant and foolish to want all behavioural sciences to become branches of psychoanalysis, he does propose that

> "the partition between observer and observed be recognised as the locus of disturbance, and the disturbance as the locus of a partition, and that statements (behaviour messages) be differentiated from statements about statements" (p.310)

- in other words that we recognise the interdependence of our anxieties and our perceptions, and that the experience of anxiety signifies a 'partition', a difference between observer and observed and a potential distortion in the observer's interpretation of the observed's perceptions and behaviours.

In understanding another, if we ascribe contextually influenced responses and infer the operation of defence mechanisms, then the message

is clear. We should be looking at how our explanations arise in our own experience and are true of ourselves and our own defences, and should seek to differentiate between the perceptions that are created in our own personal defensive response and those that are true of the other's response.

Review of Devereux and my own choice of action

Although Devereux speaks from the point of view of the psychoanalyst, where it is obviously advantageous to explore the workings of the unconscious to its fullest, in both the analysand and analyst, I found his ideas particularly interesting in view of my own experiences of anxiety and guilt during the first project, and especially appropriate to the phenomenological paradigm where perceptions and speech are not taken at their face value. Although I had no intentions of conducting a psychoanalysis in the formal sense, my doubts and anxieties had been enough to convince me that I needed to find a way of exploring the differences between my statements and those of the participants.

I decided to try to do this in the second project by differentiating my own personal perspective and interpretation or explanation of the participants from how they appeared to see themselves. The idea of developing two different perspectives was an exciting one.

I decided too to follow Devereux's admonition that the way to differentiation and intelligibility is through first allowing oneself to feel the emotional ground of contact with the other person and to become aware of it, so that the following cognitions can be understood and explored and my own defensive perceptions be differentiated from those of the other. I accepted the general directive to seek validity through exploring my own personal involvement in the inquiry.

But the search for validity seemed more complex than this, given the phenomenological premise that everyday perceptions are not adequate, and the view of the new paradigm methodologies that the observed as well

as observer must seek to confront contradictions and conflicts in their experience. If the method was to be completely co-operative, then all participants would be expected to follow Devereux's advice, and the inquiry would take a very different form from that previously envisaged, and would be focusing on interpersonal relations and perceptions in the present.

If, as seemed more likely, full co-operation was not possible, then I would take on the main role of direction and confrontation, then I would be actively involved in directing change in the awareness of others. But how could I do this and at the same time differentiate between my view and those of the participants? How could I be sure that I was not merely reinforcing and enforcing my own projections upon the participants, rather than owning them as my own? How could I even check out my own perceptions as distinct from the participants' without destroying the differentiation that I needed to preserve? How could empathy, finding the common ground for understanding be turned into differentiation if we did not both explore our unconscious processes to some depth?

This was a problem without an easy solution in practice, and highlighted a potential conflict between the empirical demands of the method that it be both (a) a method for change in self-awareness on the part of the participants, and (b) show a differentiation of perspectives.

The problem would be even worse if the participants did not agree with my own ideas and explanatory model about what constituted a valid perception or statement, and what kind of change was necessary in self-awareness.

I made at this stage a critical decision for the method, which was that the differentiation of perspectives was the more fundamental and essential feature of the phenomenological method, upon which all other forms of validity rested, and bearing in mind anyway that the

empirical inquiry would result in a change in perceptions on the part of the participants, to a greater or lesser degree. I decided to adopt the following procedure:

1. To check out my own perceptions and feelings as far as this was possible to see if they were supported by the individual, but at the same time encouraging the individual to differ. If my perceptions were readily accepted and owned by the individual they would be included in the interpretation developed from their own perceptions, but if not they would remain in my own 'view'.
2. To confront participants where there were obvious contradictions in their accounts, on the basis of their own statements and behaviour messages, and to check that their account was a true account of their perceptions and did not distort or conceal anything that they were aware of.

My aim was to enable the accounts of the participants' views to record how they experienced and understood and presented themselves and their experience as accurately and as authentically as possible. The fact that they might seem for example either idealised or full of contradictions to another did not matter at this stage, as long as the account represented the extent of their own understanding as developed in the course of the project. To this extent, the participants' explorations of conflicts took a secondary place to the differentiation of their perspectives from my own. Although each aspect was essential to and in dialectical interdependence with the other, the participants' perceptions would have little value in their own right unless the differentiation was made.

The method was not foolproof, and could never be in view of the fact that there would be a natural limit to the extent to which each might reveal their experiencing with honesty and accuracy. The accounts would naturally be limited by the context of the research project and

the influence that this had on the participants. But it was still important to strive to achieve the maximum fullness and accuracy, given these difficulties, and to establish the boundary between our views as well as to aim to facilitate the participants' learning and the development of clarity in their self-understanding.

4. Summary of developments in design (Figure 21)

Together these ideas for the development of the methodology proposed a movement

- towards a clearer differentiation of perspectives between the participants and myself, through, paradoxically, a closer relationship in practice
- in a climate accommodating and integrating individual choice and preferred styles of learning with the general condition of phenomenological inquiry that everyday perceptions should be questioned and freed as far as possible of superficial distortions and contradictions
- towards a closer integration of experiencing, action and reflection and conceptualisation.

There were three new kinds of procedure which I proposed to incorporate into the method to assist these developments. These were:

(i) The systematic noting, recording and teasing out of my own personal anxieties in the course of the project

(ii) The identification by participants of personal learning objectives at the start of inquiry and evaluation throughout of learning achieved

(iii) The immediate and constant feedback of all descriptive and recorded information to participants, to facilitate the development of interpretations in integration with the experiencing and action of inquiry.

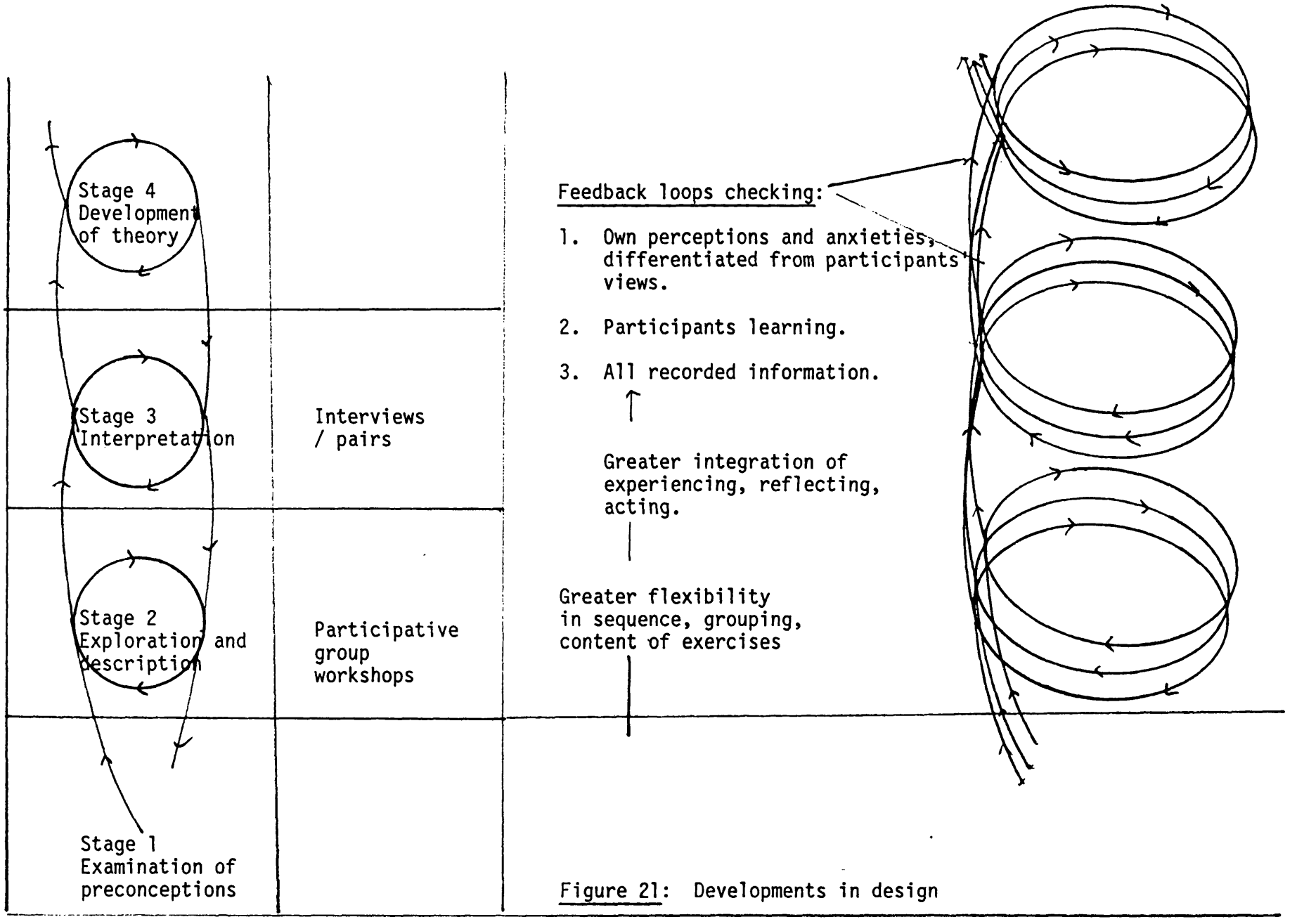


Figure 21: Developments in design

In general I hoped to develop a more integrated experiential learning methodology, through a more complex system of feedback through all stages of the empirical method, adopting ironically the kind of greater complexity that I had sought to avoid in the first project, and recognising that I could not hope to exclude myself from the 'experiencing' and interpersonal interactions of the inquiry, from becoming emotionally involved in it, even if practical constraints were to restrict my active participation in the task.

In order to incorporate these 'procedures' into the method I decided that the general programme should permit a time for detailed discussion and feedback with each individual participant (as in the first project) in addition to the group workshops. I envisaged that the general sequence of events would be as follows :

(a) An initial meeting with each prospective participant, outlining the broad basis of the project, my own objectives, the proposed areas for and methods of research, sounding out the individual's own expectations and interests and establishing initial contracts.

(b) A number of participative workshops, the content and sequence to be agreed with participants, facilitating the exploration and interpretation of personal experience, and the production of written profiles; and the development of my own interpretations.

(c) Detailed feedback sessions with each participant individually, testing their interpretation and my perceptions.

CHAPTER 7

THE SECOND PROJECT : LIFE STORIES

In this chapter I shall describe the course of the second empirical project through the stages of:

(1) The recruitment of participants and initial meetings

(2) The workshops

(3) The follow-up and interviews with each participant

(4) The development of general theory

As in the presentation of the first inquiry I shall not attempt to separate the developments in method from those in the conceptual sphere, but will aim to show the integrated development of both.

Stage (1) The recruitment of participants and initial meetings

As in the first project, I adopted an initial strategy of identifying the broad areas for inquiry and advertising the project as widely as possible as a co-operative workshop in which participants would be able to explore their own life stories from childhood to the present, while contributing to a research thesis about personal learning and change.

Leaflets indicated that the areas for experiential inquiry would include the different stages or phases in our lives, the many parts of ourselves and the different needs that may come to the fore at different times of our lives, and the significant experiences and events that have contributed to periods of change and of stability in our lives and life-styles; and that a variety of experiential activities would be involved.

Having saturated as many local postal sources as possible in the first project, I decided to try a more personal approach to advertising the project, talking about it to everyone that I met socially and asking

them if they knew anyone who might be interested and so on. I was aware of the limited cultural and class background of the participants in the first project and hoped that this time I might reach a wider kind of audience with more diverse backgrounds.

In the event, a group of three girls, who were friends of each other, showed great interest in the project, and finding that the landlord of two of the girls, Don, was also interested I was invited to make use of their house for the workshop sessions. Lorna, a friend that I have known for a year or so, had asked if she might participate in a second workshop when she heard about the first project, and indicated that a colleague of hers at work, Sean, would also like to take part. The seventh and final member of the group was Alec who, like Mary, Claire and Sara, I met in a social context. I hoped that the previous acquaintance of some of the participants would help to establish a co-operative and trusting climate, and although one or two other fairly close friends of mine had also shown an interest in the project, I found that I preferred generally to work with the stimulation of unknown and new territory rather than with other close friends of mine - partly for fear of disturbing perhaps the relationships that we enjoyed, and partly for fear of knowing them too well to the extent that it would be difficult to lay aside by preconceptions when they did not fit.

This time I visited each potential participant before the first workshop, meeting them in their home context, talking informally about the kind of things that we were interested in, and establishing our mutual contracts for participation. These initial meetings were invaluable to me in bringing our individual preconceptions out into the open, and in giving me some idea of how we might all get on together.

I met Mary, Sara and Claire together to learn that Mary and Claire, both thirty one, had been brought up in the same Welsh rural community.

Mary was working as a secretary/administrator in the health service and Claire as a banking clerk. Mary showed a lot of interest from the start, saying that she was used to analysing herself, and that she would like to help me in whatever I was doing that might eventually be of benefit to others at work. I was sure that Mary would contribute a lot to the project, though from the start began to sense a feeling of restriction and heaviness, as if there was more that she wanted to say but was at the same time compelled not to. Somehow Mary did not seem very happy. Claire was bright and cheerful and quite business-like in her approach, making it clear that she was not quite sure how she would take to the project and requesting that she be permitted to drop out if she did not find that it was for her.

Sara, aged thirty, worked in the tax office and shared a flat with Mary. She was quiet but smiling and seemed at ease, and like Mary said that she would like to help towards a research thesis. All three seemed a little overawed by the prospect of the workshops, never having taken part in anything like this before, and were not sure what they themselves wanted from it, but in the event entered into it all with commitment.

Don was the only member of the group whom I did not meet beforehand, although we spoke on the telephone, as he was away during the time immediately preceding the workshops. He was, at thirty eight, the oldest member of the group, and although reticent at first gave a good deal of his time to the project as it progressed.

Alec, twenty eight, an engineer working in the aircraft industry, was quite the reverse, in that his enthusiasm seemed at times to be taking over, as he told me what I should be doing and asking. From the start though this was coupled with a kind of elusiveness as he would avoid answering direct questions but pose some more instead for

me to answer. And although he was rarely silent, he could not say why he had chosen to take part, except "I'm a clown - I'll take part in anything". This contradiction of enthusiastic verbal and active participation combined with elusiveness and a determination not to be serious remained throughout the project.

Sean, like Alec, was full of suggestions and enthusiasm at the start and we spent a long and interesting evening, during which I met his girlfriend who joined in the discussion. Aged twenty four, Sean was the youngest in the group and was working as a financial consultant. He was clear, he said, about what he wanted from the project, seeing it as an opportunity for learning to improve his performance at work, and saying that he likes to take part in anything new that would broaden his outlook. It transpired that he was familiar with the 'Exegesis' movement, having friends involved in this, and was interested in a philosophy of developing what he called 'mental control', living by putting mind over matter. Before long Sean was interviewing me about what my 'goals' were in life, and how the research was related to them, and although I appreciated his interest I immediately found myself feeling defensive, that I was being tested out and that I would need to stand my ground. Of all the participants, Sean seemed to present to me the greatest personal challenge and opportunity for my personal confrontation - though I felt that he, like Alec, was not always giving the whole story. As the project progressed his philosophy of 'mental control' survived and was evident in practice, although I was to see another side of him, tired and looking anxious at times though relaxing more, particularly when the subject turned from 'work' matters to other aspects of life.

Lorna, thirty four, working in insurance sales, said "It's come just at the right time for me", and seemed quite excited about the pros-

pect of taking part. She was familiar with the kind of 'goal directed' training methods employed in sales training programmes, as was Sean, and was interested in the notions of 'life-planning', personal evaluation and so on. Although I was a little anxious about working with someone I already knew fairly well, I found that my fears were insubstantiated, and that a new 'Lorna' whom I had never met before or never really knew came to light in the workshops. This was something that I found personally rewarding and gratifying, and was pleased that the project was able to help us to develop and creatively strengthen our friendship.

The group as a whole was significant in so far as the age range of us all was mid-twenties to late thirties. We were all at the time of the project 'single', although Sara and Don had both been married, as I had, and Don was the only one of us who had children.

In preparation for the first group workshop, I asked each to jot down and bring with them their initial thoughts and feelings about taking part, and if possible, more specific objectives for their own participation. We left the contracting about further dates and workshops to the first meeting, and all in all we held three, at fortnightly intervals, negotiating the next at each meeting.

Stage (2) The Workshops

1. The general plan

During the initial discussions with participants I found that once again all were happy to leave the planning to me subject to their agreement of the phenomena and activities of exploration. Before embarking on the first workshop, I drew up a provisional programme as before, but with as many possible alternatives for exploration. I identified the following 'maps' as basic areas which we would need to cover somehow, but aimed to select the precise activities to do this in consultation

with the group as a whole. These were:

(i) A map of the major life decisions and environmental changes which were made in the course of life, the events which might establish the 'change' points heralding the beginning and end of particular experiential cycles of satisfaction, dissatisfaction and conflict. I decided this on the basis of the findings of the first project, where it was the decisions to change job, to change home life, or the events which thrust this upon individuals that demarcated the cyclical patterns, and gave a potential basis for delimiting 'stages' of life, from the description of events.

(ii) A map of emotional experience through life with all its changes and positive and negative nuances, where it tended towards satisfaction and where towards dissatisfaction, so that changes in general attitude through life might be made apparent.

(iii) A map of the psychological and behavioural dynamics, the experiences and actions involved in decisions and changes.

(iv) Any other maps of changes experienced by participants; how and what else they experienced in their development; and other parts of themselves that are significant aspects of identity, as constant or as changing.

I hoped that each participant would be able to develop both a self-portrait and a historical description of events, an autobiography which would facilitate the further exploration of identity in the terms defined in the first project, as a reciprocal process of developing a self-image and orientation to life through the experiential processes of decision and change.

I hoped also to integrate with these explorations simple exercises designed to practise self-awareness while providing at the same time useful information about personal experience; to incorporate those

procedures proposed for the improvement of the methodology (see p.175 above) referring to personal learning objectives throughout; giving continuous feedback of recorded information; incorporating more theory building into the groups context rather than leaving this to me later; and to provide continuity with the 'back at home' context by proposing activities to carry out in the intervening periods.

The generalsequence which we adopted was as follows :

Workshop 1: The initial development of an autobiographical framework, the exploration of significant events through life and experiential recall through different ages and stages.

Workshop 2: The detailed exploration of patterns of conflict, decisions and changes.

Workshop 3: A detailed exploration of present experiences and relation to the future and future plans for action.

2. Workshop 1

We began with a recap of the initial objectives of inquiry - that it was hoped to enable participants to explore and recreate their own life story with the intention of identifying patterns of constancy and change and exploring our potential for change, while providing in itself an opportunity for personal learning and development and planning new courses of action for the future. I emphasised that the whole point was to develop a theory based on the point of view and experiences of they themselves, and that it was important to confront me where my perceptions did not fit their experience, and to contribute as many ideas as they could throughout the project.

I had hoped to begin with a focus on individual reasons for taking part, perhaps looking straight away at or identifying the particular 'problems' or 'puzzles', which had sparked individual interest in the project. But I found that the group as a whole preferred to take a

less personally introspective stand to start with, choosing to do something that would stimulate their imaginations, and finding it difficult to verbalise their personal interests in taking part in more detail. "We'll know perhaps after the event" said Don. This set the scene for the inquiry, in which the exploration of events and the more apparent phenomena of experience gradually gave way to the uncovering of deeper personal feelings and conflicts. I found that the latter was something that could not be forced, and that there was some considerable resistance in the early stages of the group to attending to deeper levels of personal experience and to questioning perceptions, and uncovering personal conflicts. This was a problem that was to continue to some extent through the inquiry to give me some headaches for the development of the method, and empirical validity, as I had to learn how to incorporate this resistance into a method that was valid.

Sean proposed and the group agreed that we should start by mapping the significant events in our lives, and to follow this with description in pairs, each taking it in turn to tell their story, and then asking each other questions about it.

In the second part of the workshop, I proposed and the group agreed to take part in a guided fantasy which took them back through the years of their life, to their feelings at the time, to the people and the places. After the fantasy, everyone agreed that they would prefer to discuss their experiences as a whole, rather than in pairs or small groups. This was useful for me in that the beginnings of a perceptual model for understanding the relationship between present experiences and perceptions of the past began to emerge. There was some debate about whether we tend to remember the good times and the bad times equally, and what I was to find in the later stages of the inquiry was that Alec and Sean, who laid a lot of emphasis on maintaining a positive

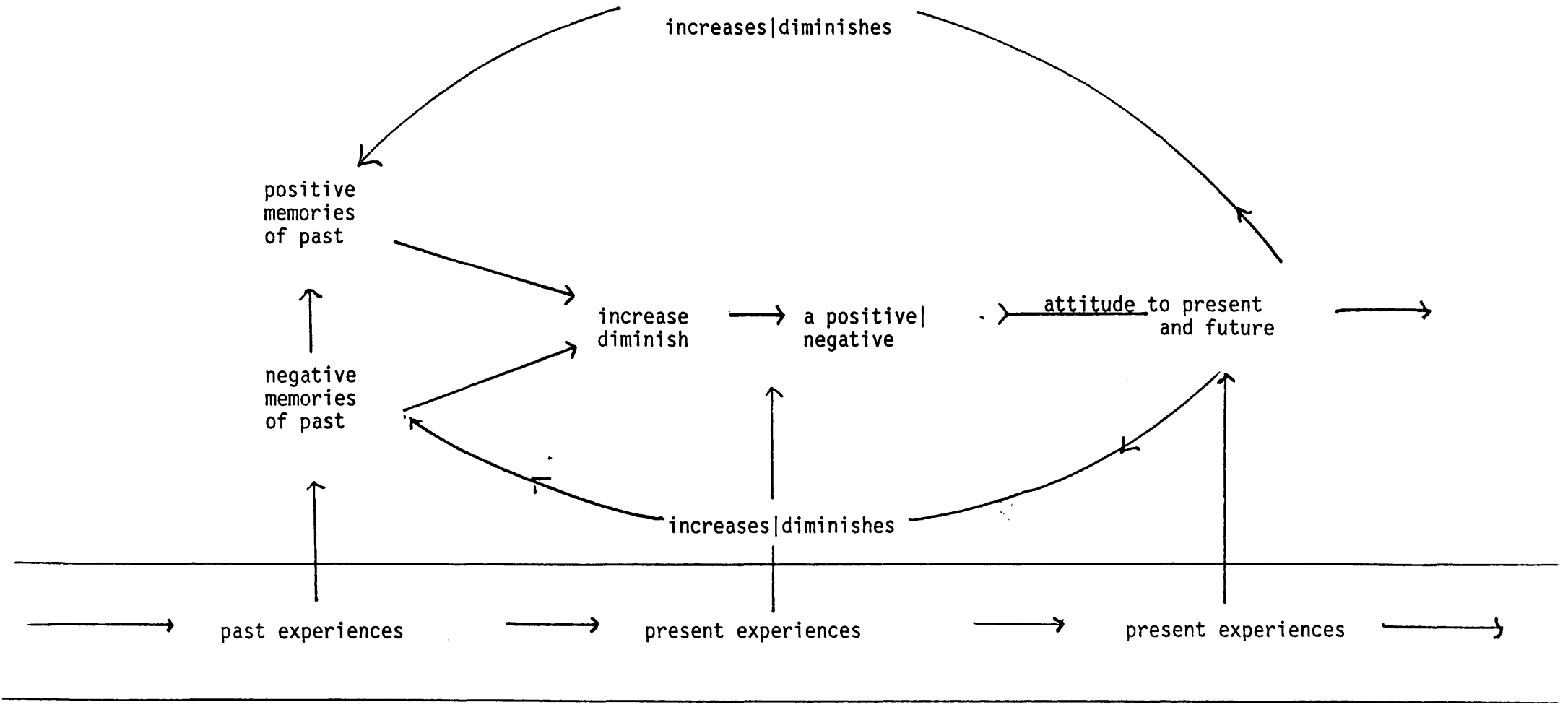


Figure 22: The perceptual model

attitude towards the present and future tended to initially recall only the positive experiences of the past; while others, such as Mary and Claire, who were not, it transpired, particularly happy in their lives at present and felt dissatisfaction, tended to remember the bad times as well without further questioning or prompting.

The perceptual model which eventually emerged through the inquiry (Figure 22) proposes that our sense of past history is a function of the attitude that is developed through our past experiences, and is mutually enforcing in so far as positive/negative experiences in the past help to create an attitude which enables us to continue to remember them as positive/negative; and if characteristically 'positive' or 'negative' we may tend anyway to experience life in a positive and/or negative light. But it is also a function of our present experiences, and according to Merleau-Ponty (see p.26 above) each new present brings with it the opportunity of a new situation, and a new perspective.

Our present experiences feed into our perceptions and interpretations of the past upon which they are built, and may radically alter our perceptions and memories not only of the meaning of the past, but of what constitutes the past.

The critical question in applying the model to inquiry, to understanding individual capacities for change, seemed to be: what are the differences between us that enable some of us to allow present experiences to influence our perceptions of the past and of ourself, and others to remain with perceptions unchanged?

How do we in other words learn from present experiences, and combine this with action to transform our lives - and become aware that we have done so?

This was the central question underlying inquiry.

3. Between workshops 1 and 2

In the intervening period, I transcribed all taped information to feed back to the participants in the next session. We agreed that everyone would also prepare in their own time some kind of drawing or graphical mapping of their emotional experiences in life, a 'life-line', or however each wanted to represent their life as a whole, but showing as far as possible the different kinds of emotions and feelings felt during the course of their life, going back to as early a time as was significant.

Meanwhile I had time to consider the methodology and the questions associated with empirical validity. I began to ask myself how 'far' might we be able to get in our inquiry into personal experience? How deep into the conflicts and contradictions would we be able to reach? I felt myself torn in two directions - one which said that I must take the initiative to confront the participants more, to try more exercises of the 'gestalt' kind, taking more time out to practise experiential skills; and another which said that this may be alienating to the participants, too much determined by me and my preconceptions of what was right and that individual choice needed to be preserved. The problem seemed to be one of facilitating non-alienating, co-operative inquiry which accepted and developed preferred individual learning styles, but also contained within it the resources for beating 'consensus collusion' and overcoming counter-productive defences. I decided that I still needed to spend time building up greater trust between us all, and to gradually work towards a more confronting approach.

4. Workshop 2

The session began with feedback and discussion and a debate about the usefulness of looking into the past. This was paradoxical, for the majority of the group had spent considerable time preparing their

'life-line' drawing, particularly Don who initially asked "what is the point?" It was as if at one level the usefulness was recognised, but at another it was not accepted. I sensed an undercurrent of contradiction between the participants' actions and words.

Sean for example brought an immaculately drawn map, which was divided into carefully measured segments, and said that he had started several versions before settling on one he was happy with. Don had used graph paper and helped Mary and Sara to 'plot' their life lines. Claire enlisted the help of a friend to 'interview' her and help her to discriminate between the different emotional phases in her life.

The majority of the time was spent working in pairs, each taking it in turn to describe the different phases and emotional ups and downs, and then interviewing each other about the different phases, trying to identify (i) the sources of satisfaction, dissatisfaction and particular conflicts at significant times, and (ii) the critical times of change and decision, trying to recall what happened in as much detail as possible.

We ended the session with a general discussion on the patterns of decision and change which participants could identify in their experiences. An interesting distinction emerged between the majority of the group, who endorsed Lorna's experience that change was something that she avoided until the situation became so bad, and she felt so far 'down' that she had to do something; and the experiences of Don and Alec and more especially Sean, who found that their changes were deliberate and preplanned. How each found themselves either falling into or premeditating change became an important aspect for further exploration in individual interview.

5. Between workshops 2 and 3

Again transcribing the recorded discussions and reflecting on the

experiences of our second day, I began to appreciate a considerable difference between my own preconceptions that change was 'a good thing', and the reality emerging in individual experiences. The major values it seemed were by and large those of constancy rather than flexibility, and participants were proud of the consistent traits that they found underlying their experiences - Lorna for example speaking of her stoicism in being able to stick it out when the going was rough.

But while the participants' accounts began to challenge by preconceptions, I also began to challenge theirs, to feel that their stories were 'missing' something, that they did not quite make sense to me. I realised that for the most part, the participants were able to accept their past as it was and their present perceptions without further analysis, to accept the validity of their conscious life as it was. But I found myself wanting to make more connections between past and present, to explore how the experiences of the past were perhaps influencing the experiences of the present, to take up the many themes which their descriptions of childhood threw up. I doubted the simplicity with which the participants were able to present their lives, particularly in view of the undercurrents of resistance and incongruities which were generally emerging. It seemed that there was another story somewhere to be told, in which the processes of the unconscious were playing a part.

This general feeling heralded the development of our differentiated perspectives, in which the participants' own accounts formed the basis for a theory of change derived from conscious experiences; and in which my own thoughts and feelings, intuitions and 'connections' which were made in my thoughts but were unsupported by the participants, formed the basis for a theory of change incorporating the defensive processes of the unconscious. The more detailed description of this

follows in the detailed treatment of the emerging theory.

6. Workshop 3

In the third and final workshop, focusing on the present, I began by putting to the group some of the existing ideas about our many-sided potential, for example our 'Top Dog' and 'Under Dog' gestalt polarities (Simkin, 1976); our 'two sides of the brain', the left hemisphere and its association with analytic and logical thought, and the right in its association with aesthetic awareness and abilities, with spatial awareness, with linguistic skills, and the many extensions of the Chinese 'Ying-Yang', Day-Night metaphor (Ornstein, 1976: 65-88); our 'sub-personalities' (Assagioli, 1975; Rowan, 1976b; the Jungian and Freudian personification of conflicting parts (see pp.32-35 above).

We agreed to spend the time exploring in more detail our different kinds of self-experience, the many parts of ourselves which contributed to our present experience, to find 'the whole person' at the centre of each life story.

As the group had found the previous fantasy exercise helpful, I led a further guided fantasy taking the participants to different contexts of their present experience, exploring the different feelings and circumstances with which these were associated.

This was followed with a number of scanning exercises on themes such as 'I enjoy' and 'I wish'. Finding that this led to further discussions within pairs, each pair was left to explore with the help of each other the different aspects of their experiencing, identifying their different characteristics.

Finally we spent some time as a group playing an 'animal' game, in which each member selected for each person in the group including themself a particular animal which seemed appropriate; and in their own case both their 'actual' and 'ideal' animal; and went round the

group in turn giving our animal nominations, and then talking in turn, said which of those ascribed to us we agreed with and accepted, and how, and which not. The object was to open up new avenues for exploring identity as something perceived by others, and to provide the opportunity for some kind of interpersonal feedback within the group, myself included, in as positive a way as possible. We ended on a humorous note, seriousness combining with laughter as animal nominations were accepted in good spirit.

We arranged that I would visit each participant individually for further discussions and feedback. I asked participants meanwhile to prepare for this by thinking about (i) changes in themselves through life, trying to pinpoint what/how/what happened; (ii) recurring patterns of change in life and life style, and (iii), very importantly, what else there was to include; whether the written and recorded information feedback seemed 'real'; and whether it gave the correct emphasis in the right places and so on.

Stage (3) The follow-up: interviews and the development of profiles

Over the next months I transcribed all remaining taped information and fed this back to each individual before arranging the meetings with each. It was a lengthy process in view of the number of tapes that had resulted from the individual sessions and pairs, and there were also additional tapes which some of the participants (Mary, Claire) had prepared in their own time to supplement their part in the workshops.

I went to the interviews armed with a number of my own ideas about the patterns of change which were emerging in the accounts of individual experience, and the significant personal characteristics which seemed to be behind the patterns. In general the problem for interpretation was that of establishing and understanding the relationship between the different kinds of maps explored in the workshops, between (i) the

description of 'events' and historical account of what happened, (ii) the experiential patterns of change through satisfaction, dissatisfaction and conflict, or however the individual perceived his/her way of making decisions and changes, and (iii) the personal characteristics, the aspects of identity which gave birth to and were born in the experiential processes.

i. Description of events and definition of life-stages

ii. Experiential patterns of change

iii. Personal characteristics

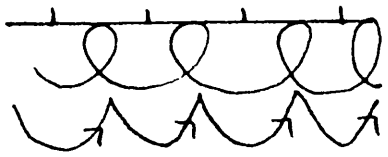


Figure 23

I aimed in the interviews to clarify with each participant their perceptions of each of these dimensions, filling in the gaps, and to explore more closely the relationship between experiential pattern and personal characteristics, to seek to understand if and how typical patterns of decision and change changed in themselves, and if and how change in personal identity was experienced in the process, and in what aspects of self.

I found that the interviews were rewarding personally, conceptually and methodologically.

From a personal point of view I enjoyed the opportunity that the interview afforded for me to become more closely acquainted with the participants, on a more relaxed and informal basis than I had been able to with the greater number of participants in the first project. I felt able to talk about myself more, and to exchange experiences with the participants, and to become more aware of them in the sense of 'presence' described by Buber (see p.21 above), and elsewhere by Merleau-Ponty (1962: 359) and by Heron (1981a:30). I no longer felt 'alienated' in Rowan's senses (see p.48 above), but more like a human

being.

From a conceptual point of view the one-to-one sessions were not only vital in helping to tie up loose ends and make strides in the co-operative development of interpretations, but they proved to be particularly helpful in the cases of the more reticent members of the group. I found that Don, Sara and Claire, the least verbose in the workshops, opened up in the more personal and confidential setting of the one-to-one, and learned that it had not been easy for those who shared a home to feel totally open in the workshops, each wanting to retain a core of privacy in their lives together. Paradoxically Sean and Alec, the most verbose and expressive in the group, proved to be the least forthcoming in their interviews. I was aware of a guardedness in their approach, a defensiveness which I did not feel in the other members of the group. It was hard work to encourage them to open up to clarify the incongruencies and more obscure aspects of their stories, and attempts to do so usually resulted in little change in their part from their original story. In their cases conceptual development required a more strategic appraoch and a greater self-awareness on my part. In the cases of the other members of the group, discussion flowed more naturally and I felt neither defensive nor aggressive.

From a methodological point of view, all these aspects were important in establishing a context conducive to the development of 'valid' theory, that is corresponding to the experiences and interpretations of them of participants, and valid in the other empirical and social senses previously outlined (see p.71ff above). The interviews were especially important in giving me the opportunity to 'try out' my own interpretations, to probe the incrongruencies which I perceived but the participants apparently did not, and to differentiate between our two perspectives.

After each interview I developed a 'profile' or interpretation based on the individual's own account and perceptions of personal change, and in most cases met with the participants a second time to tidy up the profiles. All were fed back for amendation and approval.

In writing the profiles I decided to divide each into two parts:

(i) The historical story, in the words of the participant, incorporating the division into life stages as identified by the participant, and

(ii) The interpretation of the experiential pattern of change and psychodynamic characteristics, developed from the former.

(For an example, refer to appendix following).

I came across a particular problem of interpretation in so doing, the question of how to present the interpretation 'as a whole', and associated questions of where to find and what to accept as the connecting threads of the whole, and how to relate present experiences to those of the past.

I adopted what seemed to be the approach most congruent with the perceptual model which emerged (see p.185 above), with the underlying hermeneutic phenomenological base of inquiry, with the psychological theories of identity and of Erikson (1967; 1968) and Lecky (1961), with the view that we are inherently self-rationalising and self-justifying (Bateson (see p.42 above), and Bohm (1973)), and with my own understanding of the existential basis of our 'autobiographies'.

In the perceptual model, the past is reinterpreted and subordinated to the moment of the present, which is primary. In the context of our own personal identity, the theories imply that the reinterpretation is one which gives some kind of order or meaning to our life as a whole - Erikson speaking (1967) of

> "the ego's accrued assurance of its proclivity for order and meaning" (p.260)

and Lecky, (1961) that

> "The most constant factor in the individual's experience ... is himself and the interpretation of his own meaning; the kind of person he is, the place he occupies in the world ..." (p.156)

If we accept that we are inherently self-justifying then this interpretation will be one which gives meaning to the past in order to justify the present, that our memories of the past confirm us in the person we experience ourselves as in the present. This is to me the essence of autobiography - the need to present the past in such a way that there is some enhancement perhaps and confirmation of the present sense of identity.

The implications for interpretation are that understanding begins with the clarification of present experience, and that the connecting threads for the whole may be found in the present. The story through the past up to the present will somehow make sense of the present, and there will be a logical whole. This is a view supported elsewhere by Angyal (1941: 346-370).

Thus in developing the interpretations we began with the individual's present experience, and attitudes to life, and reconstructed the path from past to present by tracing back the themes of the present to the past, looking for the connections. If an individual felt a particular kind of conflict in the present, the question was "how and where did the conflict begin?" and then perhaps, "how has the form of the conflict changed through time?"

There was no one uniform rationale applied to the development of interpretation. This came from the individual in his or her own definition of what life was all about, what gave meaning in their lives, and how they felt about it at the present time. Interpretation aimed to clarify how each arrived at their present self-experience, and in so doing to improve the quality of self-understanding and awareness,

and open up new choices for action.

Stage (4) The development of general theory

As in the first project, the general theoretical development began in the preceding stages, but with a greater degree of integration. In this section I shall describe as a whole the process of the emergence of the theory, dividing the description into three parts:

1. The theory developed from the participants' perspectives
2. The theory developed from my own perspective
3. The theory integrating both perspectives

1. The theory developed from participants' perspectives

The development of an overview of the participants' interpretative profiles fell into two distinct stages. I found first of all that there was a common pattern of change which began to emerge during the workshops, and helped to shape the development of individual profiles; and subsequently that there were individual and typological variations within this common pattern, in which the experiences of 'crisis' and of change in self were the fundamental keys. I shall begin by describing and illustrating first the common pattern, and secondly the typologies within the pattern.

(i) The common pattern of the profiles: the 'coping' pattern of development

The ideas for this first began to form in the workshops when we were discussing the ways in which decisions were taken and changes made, when there was some consensus in the recognition of a consistent pattern in each person's experience.

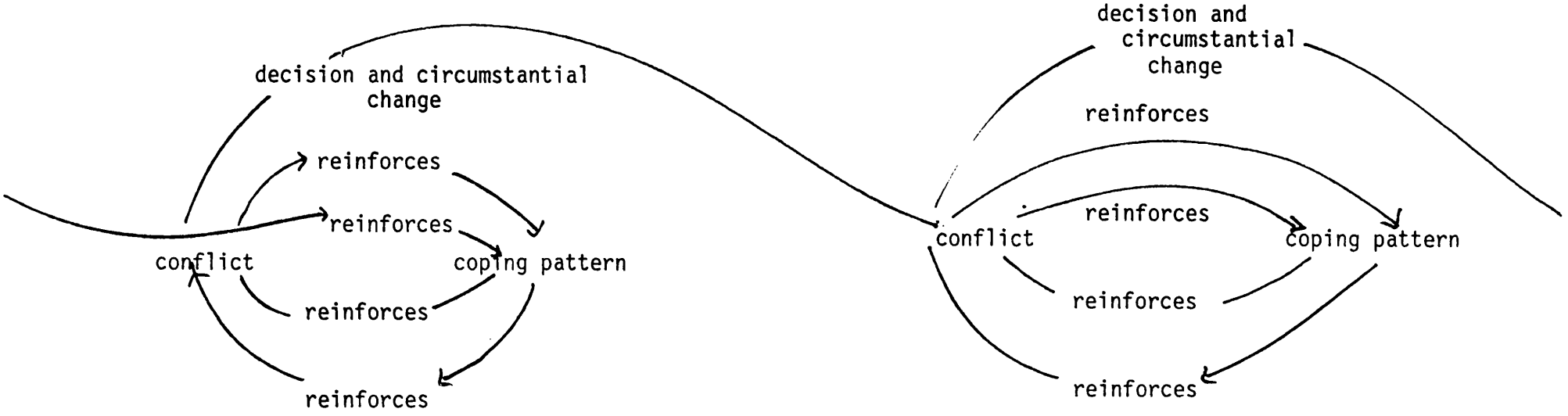
Further exploration with each individual revealed that each identified stage in their life followed in the main a repetitive pattern of decision and change, which was quite remarkable in the case of the girls, in so far as all recognised their ability to 'stick with' a

situation, even when unsatisfactory and to find that active change of circumstances, at home or work, was a last resort. For the men, changes were more preplanned, but were usually associated with planning the next step in a career and a change in the work environment. In all cases the general pattern appeared to be one of progression from one kind of experiential pattern of decision making and change, to like pattern - Lorna for example falling into a tiredness/treadmill pattern, where change through physical collapse only took her into a new treadmill.

The paradox which these patterns revealed was that although they may be perceived by the individual in reflection as rather unsatisfactory and sometimes even stupid, and did not necessarily lead to any improvement in the personal situation of the individual, to any increase in the experience of personal happiness, success, satisfaction, fulfilment and so on, they were nevertheless repeated again and again through life. It became obvious that the dynamic of the patterns was not in general based upon a rational logic accessible to the individual, but was often quite inexplicable.

Exploring the patterns of change with individuals in more detail, it was apparent that the process was more complex than initially appeared. Decision making was a difficult and taxing experience, even when in the context of career development, when every change of job brought with it new difficulties and problems. There was in every case an underlying current of conflict which the patterns of change never resolved, even in the cases of Sean and Alec whose outlook and general attitude towards themselves was one of apparently supreme confidence and belief in their capacities to achieve the success which they sought.

Looking in more detail with each participant at the persisting undercurrent of conflict in their experience, some interesting conclusions emerged. In every case the identified conflict had its roots



The coping pattern of development (Figure 24)

in childhood and adolescence, in experiences in the home, in relationships with parents and family. But more than this, the conflicts played an important part in the formation and prolongment of the repetitive patterns of change. Each individual change 'strategy', whether that of avoiding change until the last minute, or planning ahead, was intimately associated with the efforts of the individual to resolve their particular conflict. The basic pattern of change was a 'coping' pattern - a way of coping with a psychodynamic and as yet unresolved conflict which had persisted since childhood.

The irony of the whole thing was that instead of resolving the conflict, the 'coping' patterns and change strategy adopted by the individual only served to prolong and perpetuate it. The individual's coping pattern was effectively creating a vicious circle, in which the repeated assertion of it diminished conflict enough to prompt further reassertion, but never actually resolved the conflict. The result eventually was a kind of deadlock, decision and change - only then to be followed by a resumption of the conflict and coping pattern, albeit in a new context and new life stage, often with increasing energy (Figure 24).

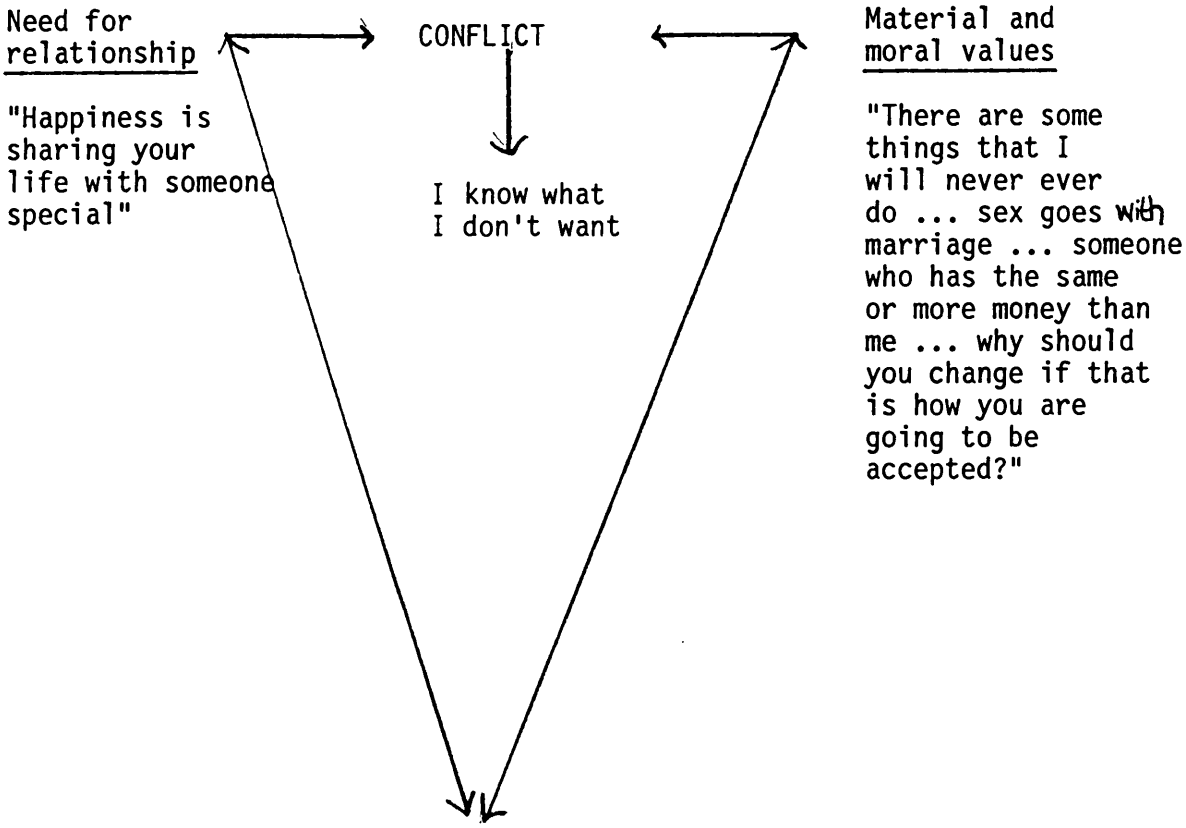
In order to illustrate the pattern, I should like to turn to the cases of each of the participants, as distilled from their more lengthy and detailed profile, identifying the principal elements of conflict.

(ii) Individual conflict and coping patterns

Claire (Figure 25)

"To change I have to be driven into a tight corner" says Claire. Aged thirty-one, Claire is aware of her active dislike of change, having stayed for five years in a job she was bored by, and twelve years as a whole in a profession she does not enjoy, as a bank clerk, and living at home with her parents on their farm in rural Wales until she was twenty five. Apart from changes from one bank to another and once for

Claire's conflict (Figure 25)



Coping pattern

Claire says, "It's always been important to me to have what I want, or I just don't bother - which means it's difficult, you're not going to compromise ... there was always something better round the corner."

promotion, and her recent decision to buy a flat of her own, the only major change in her life, was the occasion of her leaving home to move to Bristol - a change which was so traumatic that it was in itself a personal crisis.

Claire is, she admits, dissatisfied with her life and "she still doesn't know where she is going" she says. But the paradox is that she accepts that she will continue to avoid change, to be driven into a tight corner before doing anything to alter her life.

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Underlying this general pattern of dissatisfaction but no change to resolve it, we found an unresolved tripartite conflict between (i) her disinterest in developing a career, (ii) her needs for relationship and her life-long hope of finding "someone special to share your life with", and (iii) particular attitudes which reinforce these characteristics but at the same time place unsurpassable barriers in the way, and actually prevent her from making and developing personal relationships. The attitudes are a combination of the material values and moral values of her upbringing, and a persisting lack of confidence in things new, both people and places. The latter reinforces her disinterest in her career, and her material[100] and moral values prompt her to seek someone so special that she never finds anyone who is special enough.

Claire's coping pattern is to assert herself by saying "no", "this is what I don't want", hoping for something better. "There was always something better round the corner" she says, remembering her life with the Young Farmers social group in her late teens and early twenties.

The result was no change but eventually the exhaustion of all possible sources of satisfaction and marriage, a 'tight corner' where she could find no hope to counter her dissatisfaction, and the dawning awareness that[100] unless she did something herself, she would remain the daughter at home. "My life was only going to change if I wanted it

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to", says Claire.

Devoid of hope of finding a marriage partner in her home environment Claire made the difficult decision to leave home and come to Bristol. But the pattern repeats itself. The conflict remains unresolved and Claire finds herself rejecting the social opportunities of city life, the pubs and clubs, though still seeking someone special. She refuses to modify the materialistic and moral attitudes which limit her scope for relationships, and steadfastly adheres to them. "I still think that sex goes with marriage" she says, "Why should you change because you think that's how you are going to be accepted?" She accepts the likelihood of her continuing dissatisfaction - "It's difficult because you're not going to compromise."

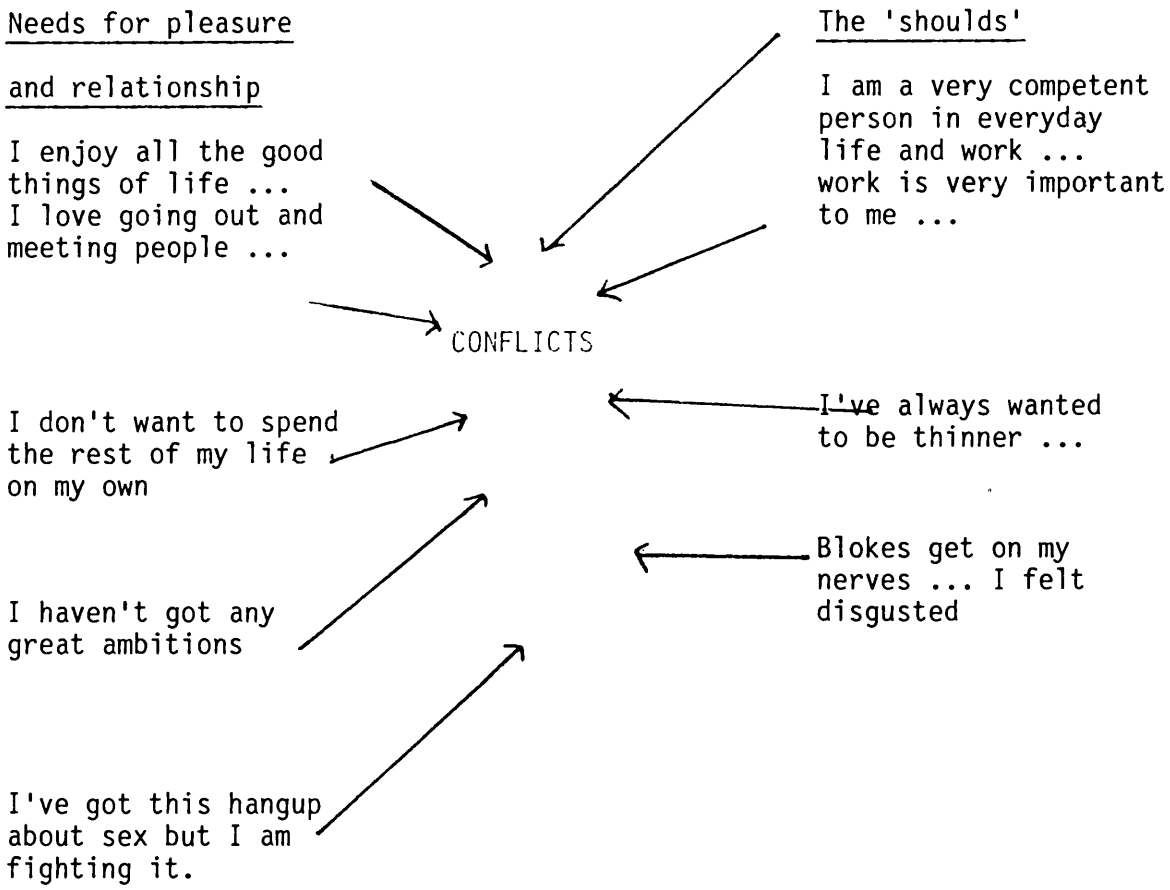
Mary (Figure 26)

Mary, thirty one, describes a more complex pattern of changes in which she made a number of job changes but tended to remain put in her home life, apart from her decision like Claire to leave home and come to Bristol. Although she has always wanted to work abroad, a need for security and familiarity has, she says, prevented her from doing so, and her general pattern of change has been one of staying put until "forced to do otherwise", while throwing her energies into her work in whatever she is doing, to the point of physical and psychological collapse, when she finds that she is forced to make some kind of a change, changing her job and sometimes going to the opposite extreme, throwing her energies into her social life.

Mary says that she wishes she could find a happy medium between her work and her social life, and that she could feel contented, but is self-deprecating. "I've always really created my own problems" she says. The solution to her discontentment eludes her.

The underlying conflict which we found in Mary's story was a complex conflict between (i) her needs for fun, pleasure, relaxation, for "all

Mary's conflict (Figure 26)



Coping pattern

Mary says "I throw myself into my work and because I'm getting satisfaction from my work it helps me to forget myself ... I'm always dieting ... when you're thin you don't have any emotions anyway ... I don't know what a happy medium is."

the good things in life", her need for someone whom she can relate to, and who understands her, and (ii) her revulsion of sexual relations, her conscientiousness and sense of the 'shoulds' in life, including being competent in her work, and her feeling of incompetence in being unable to control her weight and figure.

Mary finds that the 'shoulds' in her life, her revulsion of sexual relations and her feelings about her appearance are in permanent conflict with her social needs for fun and for relationship. If she enjoys herself, she puts on weight, and she finds no-one she can develop a permanent relationship with without sexual relations.

Her solution and coping pattern since her schooldays has been to throw herself into her work "to forget the rest" and to diet to the point of anorexia, suppressing her needs for pleasure and relationship. The pattern is self-perpetuating, as she finds that she no longer feels any kind of physical attraction or so many emotions when her weight is down. She changes her job to maintain her interest in her work and her coping pattern, until eventually she becomes a 'workaholic'.

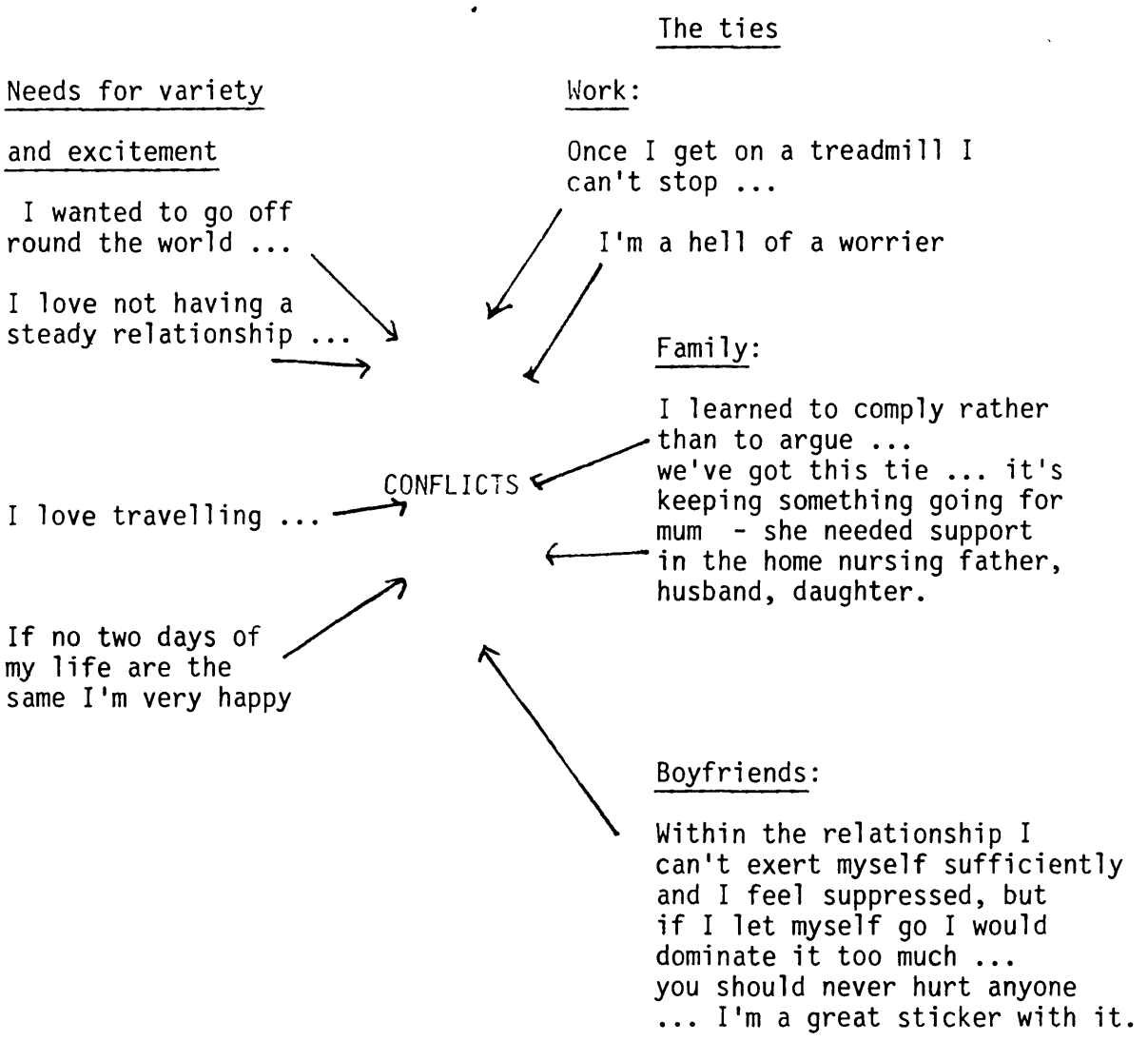
But this is no solution, eventually resulting in crisis and collapse when Mary finds that she cannot keep up both her strenuous efforts in her work and dieting. The last change in her life prompts her to take the decision to throw herself into her social life instead, and to develop a relationship with a new acquaintance in her life, Jeff.

But the conflict is far from resolved, since Jeff is gay, and Mary still seeks to find the happy medium in her life.

Lorna (Figure 27)

Lorna, thirty four, identifies three major times of decision and change in her life: one when she was living at home, at the age of twenty one; one when living in Bristol at the age of thirty; and one in the last year, which was the most significant of all, and has at

Lorna's conflict (Figure 27)



Coping pattern

Lorna says "You've got so much energy but really something holds you back and you just tick over and plod ... I would rather put a show on things."

last brought her some idea of what she wants in life. "From now on I've suddenly woken up and found that what I want to do is the most important thing to me, just exercising my right to do what I want - then I'll be able to make a few proper decisions like where one lives, getting married, having children" she says. She sees her life to date as inconclusive - "Up to now I've totally drifted" says Lorna.

The pattern of change is occasioned by physical collapse and exhaustion, a 'tiredness' pattern brought about by trying to soldier on through even when she is not enjoying life. "If I'm not happy or I don't enjoy work then I let it go right down before making any decisions" says Lorna.

The conflict underlying her capacity to soldier on until collapse but without, until recently, directing her life towards fulfilling her own needs, is in essence a conflict rather like Mary between (i) her needs for independence, for excitement and variety in her work, for asserting herself and doing what she wants to do in her relationships with boyfriends and with her family, and (ii) other feelings and 'ties' in her work, her relationships and in her home life which prevent her from doing so.

In her work Lorna recognises her potential to worry too much, to take what she is doing too conscientiously so that she does not enjoy it; in her relationships with boyfriends she is bound by the feeling that women should not dominate, and by her fear of hurting her partners; in home life she is bound by what she calls the 'family tie', which includes her sense of loyalty to mother and home, an acceptance of her responsibilities in the family, her guilt at thinking of herself.

Her coping pattern is always to plod on in her work, and to put the needs of others first in her relationships. "I think it's far better to put on a show and appear to enjoy yourself and be happy and make other people relatively happy than go down to the depths of despair

because something isn't right" she says.

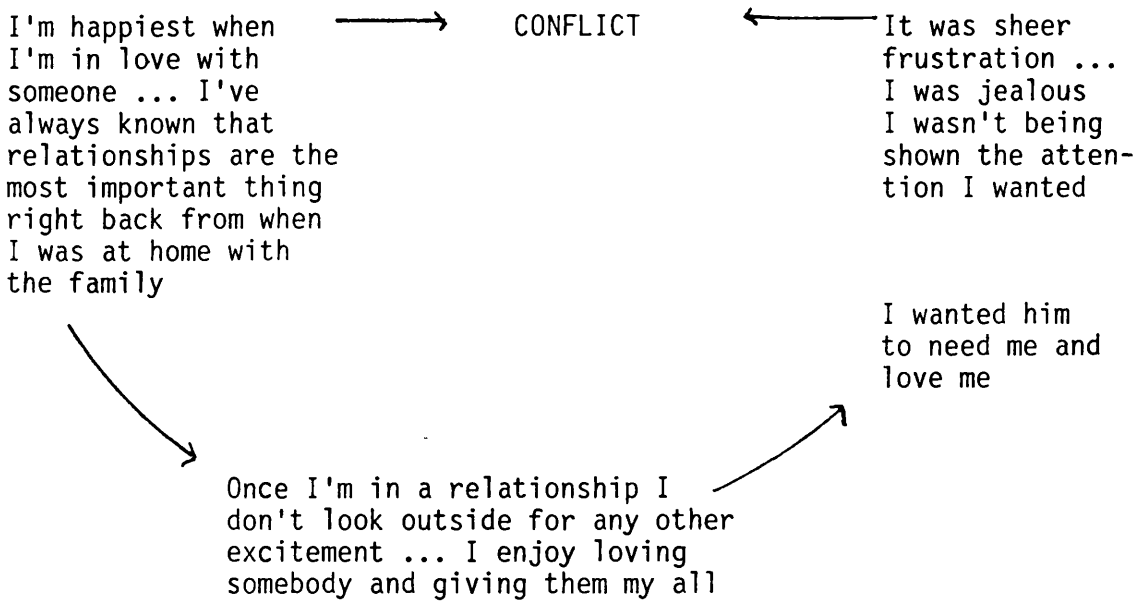
The result is that she remains living at home looking after her ill father and supporting her mother when her sister is ill, when she would have liked to take a job further afield; maintains relationships with boyfriends when she seeks a change but is afraid of hurting them; and embarks on a 'treadmill' pattern in her life in general, trying to keep everything going. From time to time this brings physical exhaustion and collapse, which at last forces Lorna into making some changes in her life, usually in her work, in sales. Changing job does not however resolve the basic conflict, but after the last major change in her life, occasioned by the simultaneous experience of redundancy and the death of her father, Lorna becomes aware for the first time of her freedom to break some of the ties she has felt bound by in the past.

Sara (Figure 28)

Sara, thirty, acknowledges that 'chunks' of her life have revolved around other people, and that the pattern of change, delimited by the beginning and ending of her two major personal relationships has been determined in part at least by others. "Up to now it hasn't been in my control" she says. After the last of these changes, the end of her marriage and a personal crisis, she feels in recovery that she has learned from her mistakes, understanding now the paradox that she has tended to fall into in the past.

The conflict which Sara identifies is a basic and simple conflict between her capacity for love and relationship, her needs to give to others and her hopes since childhood of marriage and a happy family life, and her capacity to "give her all" she says when in a relationship, to become dependent upon it to the exclusion of everything else in her life. In dependence Sara falls into a vicious circle of conflict between love and resentment, feeling jealous in her first relationship of her

Sara's conflict (Figure 28)



Coping pattern

Sara says "I kept praying it would go back to how it was before".

boyfriend's other interests, and resentful in her marriage when she finds that her husband seems not to need her as much as she wants to be needed.

Her coping pattern is always to enforce her dependence and hope that things will work out. "I kept praying it would go back to how it was before" she says, speaking of the breakdown in her marriage.

This only serves to exacerbate the problem and heighten the conflict, as her partners inevitably assert their independence even more, by pursuing their other interests and staying away.

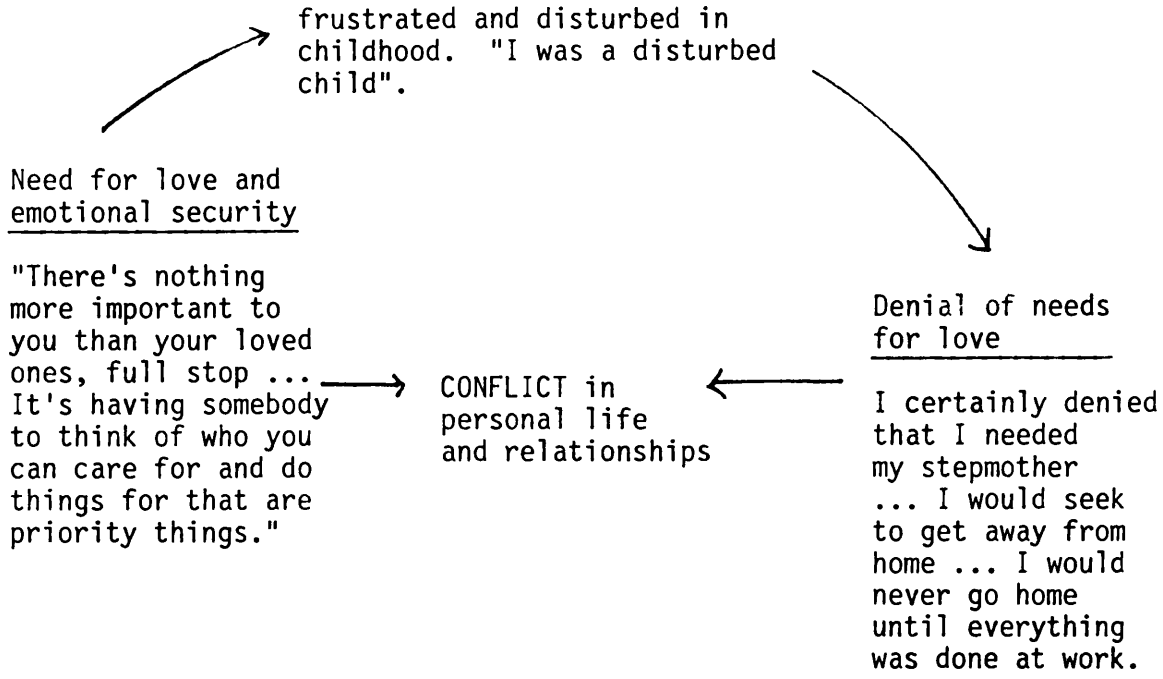
Eventually comes crisis in the relationship, decision and change as Sara acknowledges the reality that it will not be as it was before and precipitates confrontation, wanting all or nothing. In the first relationship she acknowledges that she did not want to get married - "He was stalling", she says, and makes the decision that nothing is better than a compromise, and to break her engagement. In her marriage her husband makes the final decision, and Sara plunges to the depths but begins now to establish a more independent lifestyle for herself, resolving not to fall into the blind dependence which has dogged her happiness in the past.

Don (Figure 29)

Don, thirty eight, says that he is clear now what he wants out of life though isn't always clear how to achieve it.

He divides his life into four stages, the first beginning when he went away to boarding school, the second when he left school at the age of sixteen and began an engineering apprenticeship, the third at the age of twenty one when he changed to a sales career and around the same time married and set up home of his own, and the fourth when he was promoted to a managerial post in his late twenties, followed in subsequent years by the break-up of his marriage and move to his present

Don's conflict (Figure 29)



Coping pattern

Don says "I used to feel that by being successful at work, by being diligent and working hard, that this would provide the family with security and all the things that people want and seek for ... what I did not realise was that the family wanted me, not what I was providing."

house in Bristol.

Don describes his pattern as a whole as a 'plod' situation, devoted to achieving financial security in life and developing a career in a profession in which he can find personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement. The paradox is that although he has achieved this, he finds that he has lost the one thing that he now values more than anything, a close personal relationship and a happy family life. "There isn't anything more important than one's loved ones" he says.

The basic conflict which we found was a conflict between his needs for love and emotional security, and his ability to deny them completely both in himself and others.

Don first experienced the conflict in early childhood when disturbed by the divorce of his parents, and idolising his father he says, but uncertain of his mother's love for him, he rejected his stepmother's affection - a rejection and denial reflected in later years in his inability to get on with his stepfather when living with his mother, and then in his marriage when, as he now recognises, he just did not see that his wife had feelings. "It never occurred to me to think of her as having feelings" he says - and that she wanted him to be with the family at home, and not merely the material comfort and financial security of a home.

Don's way of coping with the conflict was generally to suppress his needs for love and turn to something else - in his childhood simply 'going off' down to the beach where he lived on the Isle of Wight; in school finding a sense of achievement in sports and competitive activities; in adulthood, throwing himself into his career and working long hours away from home.

The changes in his life were the natural progressions in establishing and developing his career, each time presenting no change in

his basic conflict and coping pattern, until the eventual break-up of his marriage. This was a gradual process, in which Don's physical absence from the home was accompanied by a breakdown in communication, to the point where Don acknowledged that "we weren't on the same wave-length" and that there was no relationship to save.

Now living on his own Don is aware of his needs for love and to give love, and is determined not to repeat the pattern of the past, joking "perhaps I've gone too far the other way".

Sean (Figure 30)

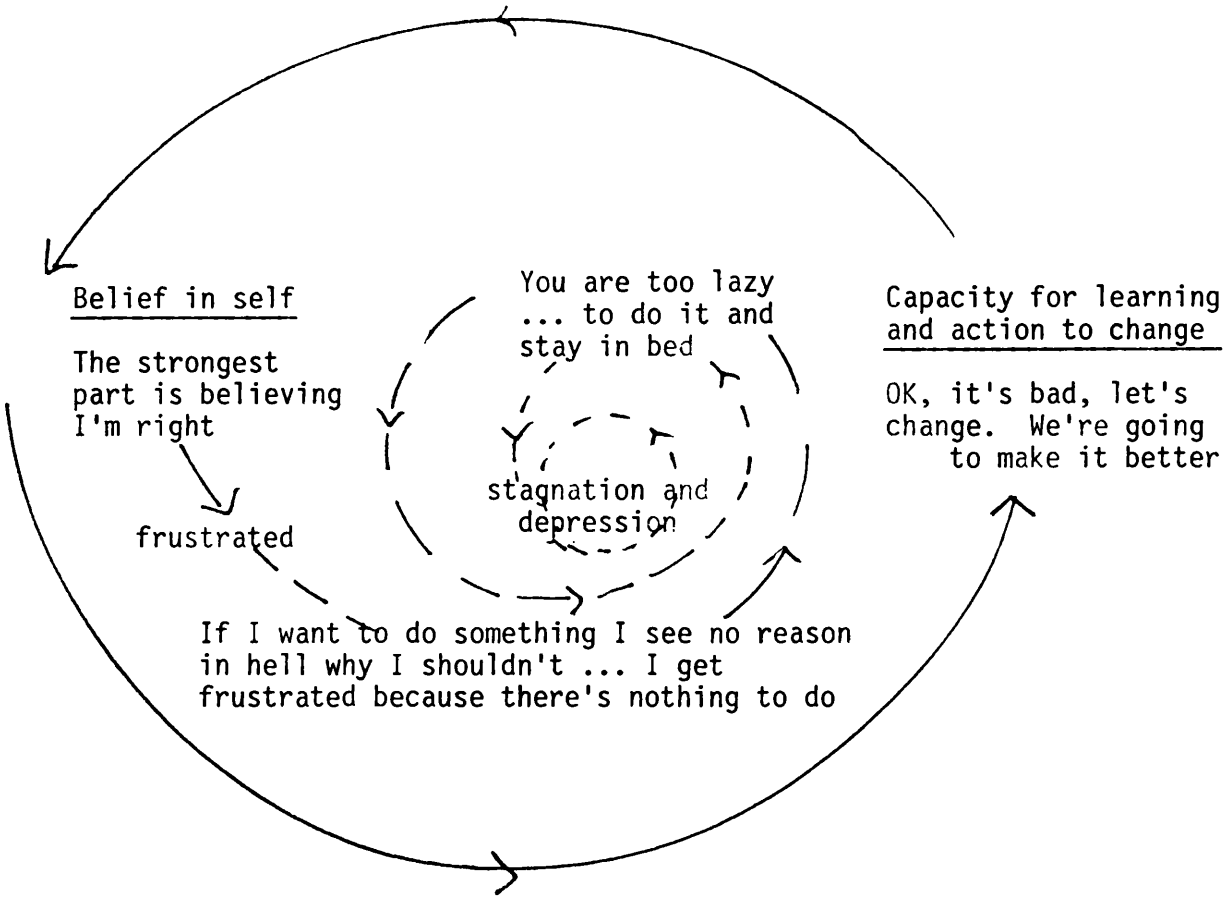
Sean, twenty four, sees his life since starting work as all one stage, during which he has made a number of decisions and changes in his work, through his days as a chef in the merchant navy, to running a retail newsagency, to insurance sales and now to financial consultancy.

Sean's attitude to life is one of confidence in his ability to achieve his material goals - "I will have this and I will have that" he says, speaking of the cars that he will buy for himself and his girl-friend, and the gold watch. The irony is that he has yet to achieve these things.

The basic conflict which Sean perceives in his life is a clearcut conflict between two sides of his personality - between the 'positive' self-assertive and successful personality, capable of achieving his goals in life, and the 'negative,reacting' person who appears when he is feeling bored, "when things aren't moving fast enough" or when he over-reacts with anger to the criticisms of others, "if someone called you a name" he says. Typically this may throw him into a vicious circle of frustration and complacency and depression which hinders him from doing anything to change the situation.

Sean's coping pattern is a learned and deliberate strategy of thinking and acting positive - saying "OK it's bad, I know - why? By

Sean's conflict (Figure 30)



Coping pattern

Sean says "By changing I've got to bring it up".

changing I've got to bring it up".

"You can actually do something positive to change it" he says, "I've developed a strong mental attitude that out of everything bad there's got to come something good".

The changes that Sean makes as a result of this are usually to take on an even more demanding job which does not give him the opportunity to feel bored, in which his ability to achieve financial success is taxed even more. The paradox of the pattern is that with each change the opportunity for frustration does not diminish but is rather increased, and Sean finds himself having to reassert his coping strategy with even greater force. But it is something he enjoys, and even now in his work as a self-employed financial consultant, totally self-dependent, he declares his senses of security and sees it as part of a process of "shaping myself and my future to what I want it to be".

Alec (Figure 31)

Alec, twenty eight, enjoys like Sean a self image of success. "The trend is up - things have been getting better and better. I am more relaxed, happier, confident in myself. I know I'm good in what I do. I know I'm socially acceptable. Now I choose my own way ... I'm extremely pleased with myself". Like Sean, he seeks material success, speaking of the big house and the swimming pool that he hopes for.

Alec identifies the major decisions and changes in his life as those when he left his industrial apprenticeship to go to college at the age of twenty; when he returned to work with the same company four years later; and now at the time of the project, when he is preparing to emigrate and take up a job in Canada. The pattern of change is one of deliberate planning. "Each time I sit there and plot for hours ... All right, now what do I want? What do I have to do to get it? I'm not unfortunately one of those people where they bang on the door and

Alec's conflict (Figure 31)

Needs for acceptance and success

I enjoy being regarded as an expert in what I do ...
I knew that I was good enough to pass the eleven plus ...
It was the social status of having a girlfriend.

The professional

My interests were poetry and English ... I should have gone to university ... I wasn't prepared to countenance living as I had as a child ... I was angry with my parents for a long time ... I've transcended the class barrier.

The peasant

I wanted to start a revolution ... I was the scapegoat ... I wasn't allowed to have ambitions ... I like change but my family are important to me ... I was dangerous ... I chose to believe that the world was bloody awful.

Coping pattern

Alec says "I've always been a loner ... you've got to be successful.

The possibility of failure doesn't exist."

say 'You're just the person we need!' I've got to crawl in under the carpet and say 'You've been looking for me - Hi!'"

Underlying this pattern of change, Alec identifies a major conflict in his identity between his working class 'peasant' identity, which rejects the middle class way of life, and is loyal to his family and home background, his belief in a 'hard' world; and his rejection of this identity, and what he sees as its 'traps' of conventional marriage and poverty, which is fuelled by his belief in a 'nice' world, his intellectual abilities and interests in literature and poetry.

The conflict is complicated by his feelings of rejection and failure, of being put in the wrong class at school, of "coming from the wrong side of the tracks", which threaten to engage him in an insoluble deadlock of frustration and anger.

Alec's way of coping with the conflict between the two sides of his identity has been to keep his options open, to become a 'loner', and to join in the fight however he can. In so doing, he embarks on a pattern of changes which alternately suppresses one side of his identity - first going to work as an industrial apprentice, as expected by his family; then making the break to gain some qualifications and go to college against the wishes of his family; and then returning as an engineer to the company where his father works; and now pursuing a middle class option, emigrating on his own to Canada.

Each time that he makes a change, though, the other side of his identity surfaces, and he recalls the times that he has opted out of the fight for a while, "going hell for leather", out for a good time, until he makes the decision to change to the opposite direction.

And although Alec now feels more confident in himself and in achieving what he wants, the conflict still persists unresolved.

(iii) The common pattern: interpretation of the underlying principle

The pressing question which the 'coping' patterns pose is the question of the rationale of the paradox. Why is it that each embarks on a coping pattern which never actually resolves the conflict? Why the lack of awareness of the ultimate futility of the coping patterns, until too late, until after the event? Why such resistance to trying new ways of resolution?

A review of the individual patterns suggests that in every case, the coping strategy adopted is that which is rationally acceptable, which promises to preserve self-esteem, to preserve whatever is valued most, in self, whatever upholds the image of self as positive and successful. It is the manifestation of "I am and I can", a movement to preserve and reinforce this rather than to open up and explore the more doubtful and less acceptable aspects of the conflict, and to avoid at all costs the experience of any kind of disillusionment, or disturbance in the view held of self and of the world.

The result is inevitably a suppression of particular aspects of personal potential, of particular needs or tendencies. But suppression can never be complete or final. Coping is only ever coping, and even when the individual can cope no longer and is precipitated into decision and change, the strategy of suppression continues, usually with even greater energy than before.

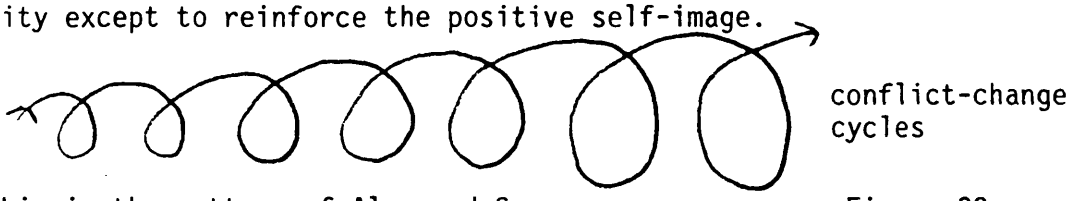
This is the common pattern of change which emerged in all the profiles. I should like now to turn to the different patterns within this, differentiated by the appearance of crisis and the extent of personal learning and change in the process.

(iv) The typologies of change

Taken together, three different patterns of change emerge in the profiles of individual experience, each a variation of the 'coping'

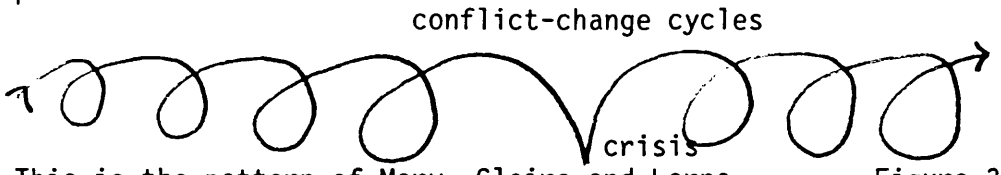
pattern. These are:

(a) The basic repetitive pattern, where a self-perpetuating coping pattern brings decision and change without any major crises, and apparently without any major changes in self-perceptions and identity except to reinforce the positive self-image.



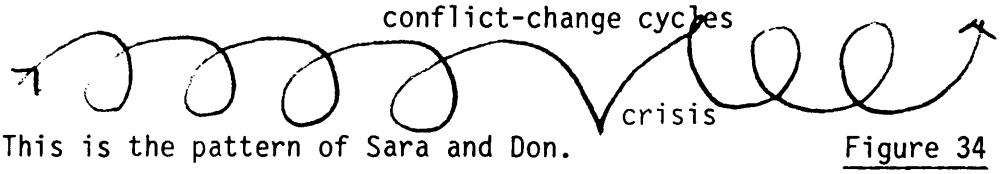
This is the pattern of Alec and Sean. Figure 32

(b) The basic repetitive pattern, in which the conflict is exacerbated with every change and leads eventually to change in the form of a crisis, but only to be followed by a resumption of the basic pattern.



This is the pattern of Mary, Claire and Lorna. Figure 33

(c) The basic repetitive pattern which results as above in crisis but is followed then by a major change in the individual's self-perceptions, in the form of the conflict and coping pattern, in other words in the form of the pattern itself.



This is the pattern of Sara and Don. Figure 34

I shall take each of the forms in turn, identifying the kind of learning which comes with each.

(a) The basic repetitive pattern of Alec and Sean (Figure 32)

The key contradiction in this pattern is that of 'control'. The interesting paradox about it is the ability of each to exercise a coping

pattern of control, of taking decisions and making changes in order to avoid the full experience of their characteristic conflict and a potential crisis - but in so doing, living in a permanent kind of crisis, living the experience of it in the fear of it although it never actually happens.

Both pride themselves on planning and controlling their destinies, through sheer effort and determination, Sean disciplining himself so that he always reasserts his positive side in response to frustration, Alec taking up the alternative option of a move either towards or away from his working class roots.

The one thing the identity of both depends upon is never to give way to the conflict so that it overwhelms them, but to 'transcend' it (a word used by both), in their case meaning to fight the experience of contradiction by focusing on one side of it. As soon as the other side begins to emerge, as when Sean becomes bored with navy life and falls into complacency, each makes plans for the future to avoid any further kind of internal confrontation. Theirs is a strategy in which circumstantial changes are made to diminish the experience of conflict, but although crisis is never reached it always exists as a potentiality and life is spent fighting against it.

And since each change demands even greater effort to sustain the feeling of personal success so essential to the experience of 'transcendence', the fight is seen and experienced as a fight to achieve success, all the while obscuring the deeper roots of the conflict.

Learning and personal change

The kind of learning experienced in this pattern comes from the sense of development and progression in their fight through proving personal strength and control, through fostering a third personality of success who can conquer and keep the conflict between the other two

sides, the positive and negative in Sean's case, the working class peasant and the middle class intellectual in Alec's, under control, although allied more closely to the positive and middle class sides than to their opposites.

Each has been aware of their characteristic conflict since adolescence and feel that they know themselves very well, that there is no more to learn about themselves. The learning in their lives comes not from the discovery of conflict but the discovery of their strengths and ability to survive in spite of it. Development involves no change in their coping patterns except to reinforce them.

(b) The basic repetitive pattern of Mary, Claire and Lorna, culminating in crisis (Figure 33)

In this group the key contradiction is compromise.

Life is spent desperately trying not to compromise their ideals of how they 'ought' to be, and yet each finds herself living in compromise, never experiencing the life that they actually want, but preferring this to questioning the ideals which help to constitute their conflict in the first place.

In all cases, their conflict is one which both compels them to uphold the values and ideals of how they should be living, denying other ways of exploring their needs for relationship and pleasure in life, and also in so doing to inhibit their capacities for decision and change. each coping pattern is also a protective pattern which gives a rationale for not making any decisions and changes, and is enforced by needs for security and familiarity. Mary for example prefers to throw her energies into dieting and doing well in her work rather than overcoming her fears in relationships and exploring her needs for travel and excitement in her life.

Changes are avoided completely or are forced when maintaining the

coping pattern brings physical collapse. But one of the interesting aspects of the pattern is that it catches up with itself. Although for a while, partial changes in lifestyle may be made to counter the resurgence of conflict after collapse, this does not result in any change in the coping pattern, until finally it brings crisis.

In each pattern, there is apparently an inbuilt potential for crisis; Mary and Lorna exert their coping pattern with even greater force every time that they make a change, until they run out of energy and collapse is total, while Claire embarks on a pattern which is bound to lead eventually to total disillusionment and dissatisfaction, eliminating all her resources for keeping going and ever finding the man she seeks, by rejecting all, until no more remain and she feels trapped in a net closing round her.

Crisis appears as a two-phase process, drawn out over considerable time. In the first phase, each asserts their coping pattern with even greater energy, life depending upon it. Through the experience of redundancy and the death of her father, Lorna's one concern is to keep going at all costs, to preserve the self-image and identity that she is proud of. The coping pattern is stretched to the limit before the idea of change is entertained, a desperate effort to maintain attitudes and behaviours of the past.

The second phase is the phase of change, the acceptance there is an insurmountable conflict, an inability to maintain perceptions of the past, a kind of disillusionment and acceptance of the fact that all is not well and that present behaviours are not bringing whatever is sought. There is inevitably a time of confusion, of trying to sort out what it is that she really needs and wants to do, a time of facing up to facts, and to the need for change. Claire for example cried for days, weeks and months she says, while she realised that she would never

find the man of her choice staying at home on the farm in Wales, but could not face the prospect of moving away from home.

But even when decisions are taken and changes are made in the wake of crisis, no clear way forward is found and each resumes to a greater or lesser extent their ideals and values of the past. Claire is determined that she will not change; Lorna is proud that her coping pattern of soldiering on saw her through; Mary is confused and uncertain what to do, and although she recognises her fear of physical relationships and the counter-productiveness of her dieting, she sees them as hangups which will always be a part of her life.

Learning and personal change

The kind of learning associated with this group is the discovery and acceptance of their characteristic conflict. Unlike Sean and Alec who were aware of their conflict from an early age, life for this group has been all about keeping their conflict suppressed. In crisis each comes to learn and accept it, though such is the strength of the feelings and ideals which bind them to their coping patterns that they are not sure how to resolve it, if ever. "I know I want a happy medium" says Mary, "It's just trying to get there."

(c) The basic repetitive pattern of Sara and Don, culminating in crisis and personal change (Figure 34)

In this pattern the key contradiction is 'happiness'.

Life is devoted to building a world and a life-style in which happiness is experienced but paradoxically lost.

The difference between the experience of Sara and Don and that of the three girls above is that they do actually experience what it is that they are seeking at the time, and in the experience of crisis undergo considerable learning and change. The interesting question is how this happens, how in their case there is substantial change in

self and self-image.

One of the key aspects of the pattern is that the learning is derived from the collapse of personal relationships. The coping pattern which each embarks upon does not inhibit the development of permanent relationships and marriage, and it is in the collapse of these relationships that learning comes.

Both develop coping patterns which bring happiness for a time at least, Sara experiencing the loving relationships that she seeks and enjoys, and Don achieving the fulfilment in his work and financial security that he needs. But with the experience of happiness, investment in their coping patterns becomes total, colouring not only their understanding of themselves and their needs but the world around them. They are able to believe that their way of life is the way of the world, that their own needs are shared by others. Sara continues to believe in the possibility and actuality of close personal relationships of mutual need for each other and dependence, in spite of the break-up of her first engagement when it became obvious that this was not so; Don continues through his life to believe that a nice home and material comfort is what people generally need, never occurring to him that emotional security is important.

The more signs that each receive that their beliefs are not upheld by their partners in relationship, the more they persist in their world view, believing that all must be well. Don was surprised to find that when he had finished renovating a new home for the family in the country, his wife did not want to move. Crisis is heralded by a breakdown in communication, in the capacity to negotiate with partners, and the awakening to the second phase is heralded by the actions of their partners.

Sara describes the critical turning point when she at last faced

but now I would get along with someone else's contentment and by the happiness that I had provided for them ..." Now Don takes joy in giving and caring in his work and home life; he finds that promotion is no longer so important, and that his immediate priority is to establish a trusting and caring relationship. Nor is he devoid of hope: "I do believe in not letting the past destroy the future ... It's pretty near the end if you've got to say, 'Well I'm going to live on my own because that's the only way I can trust what tomorrow will be like!'"

Sara too acknowledges her 'naivety' in the past, not realising that "men went off with other women", as her husband had done, and resolves to keep her new independence and maintain her own interests if she enters a serious relationship again. She does not expect any more the kind of relationship she so much wanted in the past: "I don't think I'm going to meet a conventional man, the conventional stability with the house and children ... I've got past that now" she says, and regrets not having spent more time in her earlier days gaining qualifications and thinking about her career. Now she puts more into her work, with the local tax office, even working in the evenings, and accepts that her life will be very different from the life she had anticipated in her teens and twenties.

(v) Summary of the theory developed from the participants' perspectives

From the review of the interpretations by participants of their own experiences, the process of personal learning and development through life appears as a process of change paradoxically through constancy. The central elements of the process are:

a) The need to experience self as positive and powerful, strong, competent, successful and so on.

b) The resistance to owning to any aspects of personal identity and characteristics which challenge this.

c) The capacity to repeatedly reinforce this resistance, whether by changing circumstances or resisting this change as well.

d) The capacity to precipitate crisis through reinforcing resistance without circumstantial change.

e) The capacity to learn from crisis.

The potential and need to learn is inherent in the nature of the basic characteristic conflict experienced by each, which typically gives birth to the resistance to owning and exploring aspects of it; but paradoxically resistance can bring about eventual awareness of the conflict, and learning and change, usually through the experience of crisis.

The critical differences helping to determine individual patterns of learning or not learning as the case may be, appear to be the capacities to make changes in circumstances to avoid crisis and eventual learning (as do Sean and Alec); to pursue coping patterns of resistance without making changes in circumstances to the point where crisis eventually occurs (as Mary, Claire, Lorna, Sara and Don); to develop a degree of happiness and relationships within the coping pattern, which in being overthrown, precipitate considerable learning and change (as Sara and Don); or to adopt an idealistic and moral basis of identity which is so strong that it survives intact after crisis, in spite of the individual's recognition of the conflicts that it brings (as Mary, Claire and Lorna). The paradox of the whole process is that what at one time appears as a positive strength, appears at another as a weakness, hindering growth and development. And the more the positive identity is upheld to the cost of other personal needs and characteristics, the more the potential of the individual for learning and change, although this is not necessarily realised.

In general the process of change appears as a dialectic of reality as both 'ideality' and 'actuality' - ideality represented in the coping

patterns and natural resistance to perceiving conflicts and divisions within oneself, and in the tendency to perceive self as positive and powerful; and 'actuality' in the fact that we are creatures of conflict, that we are not necessarily strong, positive and powerful, that life and experience are not as simple and straightforward, as consistent as we would like to think. It is a dialectic which is mediated by both circumstantial change and learning and personal change, and the three different patterns of the participants illustrate three different forms of the dialectic.

In all patterns, the starting point is the fact that while we tend to pursue idealistic self-images and coping patterns which tend to resist and suppress the incongruences within ourselves, in time the actuality of our experience always makes itself known. The suppressed conflicts within ourselves and frustrated needs always inevitably surface to prompt us to question our chosen and 'skewed' or incomplete ideality. Each of the learning patterns describes a different way in which the fight between ideality and actuality is managed.

Two basic forms of this emerge:

a. The pattern utilising circumstantial change to reinforce resistance to the conflicts of actual experience.

b. The pattern resisting circumstantial change as well.

a. The pattern utilising circumstantial change

This is the simplest form of the dialectic, exemplified in the stories of Alec and Sean, and in the earlier experiences of the other participants where minor circumstantial changes are made from time to time. Here, although frustration is experienced in the pursuit of the ideal life and identity, energy is invested in maintaining coping patterns by planning circumstantial changes, in which the individual can forget the frustrations of the past and continue to live with the same self-

image and perceptions of self. As soon as actuality begins to catch up again, and there is a hint of frustration and conflicts within oneself, another circumstantial change is planned. Life is lived more or less in ideality, and resistance to conflict is maintained.

b. The pattern resisting circumstantial change.

In this pattern, exemplified in all cases leading to the experience of crisis, as soon as frustrations are felt the individual reasserts his or her ideal identity within the situation as it is. The crucial point about this though is that with every reassertion the potential for frustration, for increasing the pressure to recognise the actuality of conflict, grows.

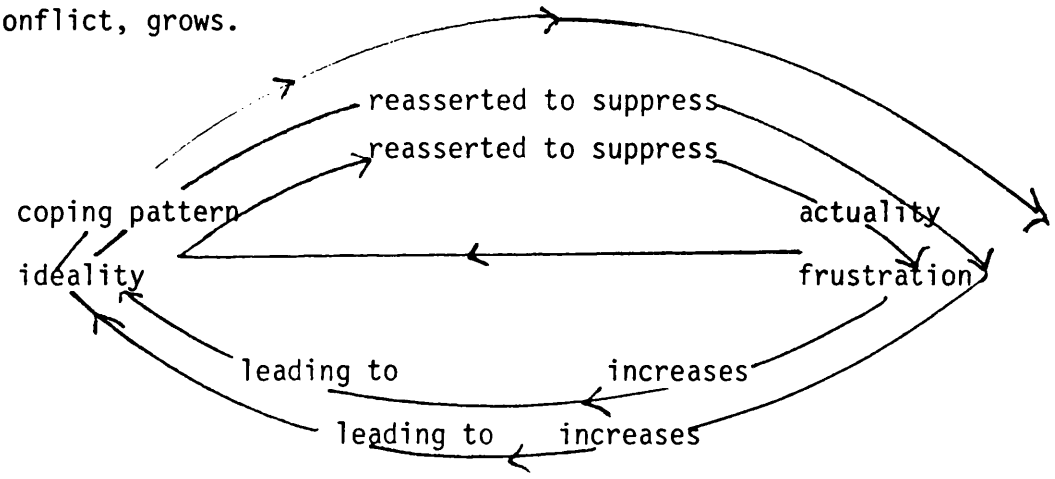


Figure 35

Two different ways in which this happens are found in the inquiry.

It may be as a result of the continued suppression of personal needs, as in the cases of Lorna and Mary, where frustration is increased to the point that the body cries out that it can cope no longer, and the actuality is recognised with physical and psychological collapse, that deprives the individual of the resources to continue to pursue her ideal perceptions.

Or in the cases of Claire, Sara and Don, their coping patterns actually deprive them of the concrete sources of happiness and satisfaction upon which their ideal perceptions depend, and they are engaged

in an externalised conflict with the world. Claire pursues her ideals but in practice eliminates all possibilities of ever realising her hopes in practice.

Sara and Don pursue their ideals in relationships so that the relationship itself begins to suffer and the partners upon which they depend for their happiness become unhappy. Here the vicious circle of ideality suppressing but reinforcing actuality is strengthened by the breakdown in verbal communication that ensues. There is nothing to tell them that things are going wrong other than their own perceptions which still enforce their ideal view.

Eventually the gap between their own perceptions and the experiences of their partners becomes so great that their partners take actions which cannot be avoided, bringing home the actuality of the situation.

This heralds the experience of crisis, which is in all cases the experience of overwhelming conflict within self or with the world, a disillusionment in which the gap between personal ideals and perceptions and the conflicting actuality is experienced; in which there is a 'split-state' experience, a questioning of which is the right reality. With the acceptance of the reality of the actuality of conflict and frustration, the acceptance and recognition of the pointlessness in continuing in the pattern of the past, the acceptance that it is idealistic and not grounded in any reality, comes decision and circumstantial change.

The personal learning and change which follows is a long process. Learning and finding a way of resolving the conflict between the ideality of the past and the actuality, now accepted, of experience, is a slow process of reorientation in the world, of reflection upon the past.

Where parental values still provide a way forward, a positive base on which to rebuild identity in the future, as for Mary, Claire, Lorna, each accepts their own potential for self-induced conflict but find

it easier and preferable to live with this, to revert to their previous ideality though now recognising its limitations and the inevitability of frustration in their lives. Each recognises that they might change more in themselves but accepts more or less the difficulties of ever doing this. Each lives in a modified, but not greatly changed, ideality.

Where the idealistic base of the past is shattered completely, as for Don and Sara, each accepts that they want and need to develop a new identity, each accepts a new ideality and actuality, not only accepting their potential for conflict but deciding to do something about it, to adopt new attitudes and behaviours to resolve it. In crisis each discovers a new aspect of themselves which tells them that they cannot live as they have done in the past and gives new hope and new ideals for the future.

The mystery, which no amount of theorising will ever explain away, completely is what prompts some of us to choose one way forward through crisis, some of us another.

2. The theory developed from my own perspective

The preceding theory is that developed from the participants' own understanding and perceptions of themselves and their experiences. I should like to turn now to the interpretation developed from my own point of view, which reflects both my own experience of the participants during the course of the project, and the interests that it generated for me. It says as much about me and my preconceptions as about the participants.

I found that there were three kinds of 'dialogue' that I was drawn into in the course of the project, dialogues which caused me to question the perceptions and understanding of the participants. I shall begin by describing them, and their influence on my own perspective. They

were:

(i) The theoretical dialogue

(ii) The intuitive dialogue

(iii)The emotional dialogue

(i) The theoretical dialogue

The theoretical dialogue was fed by my own preconceived ideas from psychology and philosophy which urged me to question both the content of individual accounts and their experiences, and their interpretations of it.

From an early stage I was disturbed by the apparent emphasis on constancy rather than change, and wanted to understand why so little change, why such value is placed in strategies of resistance. I found myself more inclined to see the resistance as something negative, finding it hard not to interpret it in principle as a weakness rather than as a strength, in keeping with the notion of resistance adopted by Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1974), and derived from the classic defence theories of psychoanalysis, in which it is antithetical to growth.

I wanted to locate the individuals' interpretations in a wider context of understanding, which might explore the roots of the conflicts and the significance of their appearance in childhood.

This was an approach that was not well received by the participants, who accepted their conflicts as such, but were reticent about exploring any further into their childhood experiences, as if they did not wish to disturb the perceptions that they held. Their resistance only confirmed the general relevance of a theory incorporating the perspectives of defence mechanisms as a manifestation of the suppression and repression of unacceptable childhood experiences, and I was interested in exploring further the evidence of this in the data as far as possible.

In addition to this general aim, there were two further subsidiary

aspects of the emerging theory that I wanted to be able to clarify further.

One was the question of 'levels' of change, in a hierarchical sense. While each of the participants was generally self-assured and self-accepting, each maintaining a positive front and a sense of their strengths, was there any way in which some patterns might be more 'growthful' than others? I wanted to explore how this notion of levels of change might be reflected in a theory based upon the view of resistance as a defensive strategy inhibiting growth.

The second question allied to this was that of the differentiation between individual capacities for crisis and change. How might this differentiation be more clearly understood? What rationale might there be, other than the simple fact of the difference? What deeper interpretation might be possible?

(ii) The intuitive dialogue

Supplementing these questions based upon my own pre-existing conceptual framework and the need to improve the clarity of the theory, I was also influenced by the guidance of intuition - my intuition generally of how much trust there was between us, how honest each individual appeared to be with the other participants, with me, and with him/herself. With intuition I found myself aware of undercurrents of feelings, of tensions which were not voiced, of a presence which ran contrary to verbal expression.

In the cases of Sara, Don and Claire I felt none of these tensions and, mistakenly or not, felt that each experienced life exactly as they expressed it, that each was quite honest to their own experience and felt nothing to lose by this. I felt sometimes that Lorna was perhaps saying what she felt she 'ought' to say, rather than what was actually so, in keeping with her acknowledged characteristics of wanting to please

others, but was able to sort this out in time by confrontation on the questions of how much she felt she had learned and changed as a result of her experiences. Initially Lorna said that she had changed a great deal as a result of crisis and in the last few months, but in discussion we established that it was her capacity to soldier on and to continue to support the family that enabled her to recover from crisis, and that these were still paramount values in her life.

In Mary's case however I felt that there was a lot more which Mary might have said and explored, but that she recoiled from doing so, perhaps from a lack of trust in me that I might be able to understand. Mary seemed tense in the company of either myself or the other members of the group, but was able to express her feelings and contribute a great deal through writing. As a result of this, I tended to perceive Mary as someone locked into a pattern which was not helpful to her, which was preventing her from communicating in discussion as much as she would have liked to, but which she could express when left to it on her own. I was sure that Mary could have entered into inquiry in a great deal more depth, but equally that there were powerful influences in her life and experience that prevented her from doing so. I found myself wanting to understand a lot more, to help, and perceiving Mary accordingly as someone in need of help, and not sure of herself at all in spite of her assertion that she was used to analysing herself.

But it was in the cases of Sean and Alec that I felt the most need to question their accounts of themselves. Did they both really see themselves as successful and gaining in success? or at least, did they experience this all the time? Or was this a social image, which for reasons known only to them they were beholden to uphold? In discussion both fenced questions which in any way challenged this image of success, using attack as a form of defence, finding it important to control the

course of events in the project as well as in their own lives. As a result I found myself asking, why such a need to fight the world and to prove themselves? Why such defensiveness? Why such an interior desperation? These were questions which, because they existed, were never likely to be answered by the participants themselves. But I hoped that some clues might be found in the further exploration of the data.

(iii) The emotional dialogue

Underlying and complementing this dialogue lay a dialogue of emotions in which I felt my own experiences and feelings towards the participants influencing the apparently rational conceptual dialogue.

I felt a great deal of empathy for Sara and Don, since I too had undergone a considerable shock in my life with the experience of divorce. But I didn't think that I had learned so much in such a positive way as they had done. I felt the greatest admiration for them, particularly Sara in her recovery from near suicide, and warmed by their experiences. I naturally wanted to place their patterns at the 'highest' level of any hierarchy, elated by the calmness and strength that they showed now in recovery. But at the same time I found it difficult to accept their patterns of experience before crisis. How could Don not have been aware that his wife had feelings? How could Sara have been so blind as to believe that anyone might withstand a relationship of such potential claustrophobia? I wanted to understand more clearly how the impossible had been possible.

In Mary's case I found that I became more and more worried about the pattern that she seemed to be locked into. I wanted her to be able to break out of it, to break out of the straight-jacket that she seemed to be in of living by working, dieting and avoiding sexual relations. I wanted her to be free and able to enjoy life, and felt quite resentful at the fact that she was not. I began to attribute her unhappiness

to the narrow values and dogmatism of the churchgoing village community that she had been brought up in, quite unfairly perhaps, but felt nevertheless that the teachings of her childhood had a lot to answer for.

I found it difficult most of all to empathise with Alec and Sean, and was immediately drawn into an emotional kind of relationship with each as a result of their aggressive attitudes, their needs to tell me what to do. Although in practice I found that the easy way to handle this was through exercising an outward calmness and control, I felt an inward defensiveness on my part and a retaliatory criticism of them. Why did they need to be so aggressive? Did they really believe what they were saying? Could they not see the contradiction between their assertions that they were 'winning' and the fact that they had to in the first place? The fact that I was drawn into a kind of emotional fight by them made me want to understand why this was so, whoever their fight was with.

And I realised too that I tended to interpret their aggression as 'un'-growthful, 'un'-developmental, as a symptom as it were of an unhealthy defensiveness which prompted them to act alone against the world, rather than with the world and in communication with it. I saw their attitudes as antithetical to the conceptualisation of learning as dialogue with the world that I had adopted. Perhaps it was my definition of 'dialogue' that was the critical factor in this, but this was nevertheless my own perspective, in which I viewed an essential aspect of dialogue as the ability to listen to others and accept others as they were. In terms of 'levels' of learning I tended to view the pattern of Alec and Sean as less developed than the other groups.

(iv) The synthesis: towards my own perspective

In general the consequence of these dialogues was to lead toward the development of an interpretation to complement those of the parti-

cipants, to answer the unanswered questions in a way that was congruent with my own conceptual, intuitive and emotional response to the participants, and which was essentially my own personal interpretation. The object was to develop a perspective illustrating how the participants made sense to me, and illustrating how the differentiation into 'levels' of learning was located in my own experience and value judgements.

The fundamental aspect of my own interpretation was the fact that it was developed from my perceptions and assumptions of phenomena of which the participants were unaware, and which they denied as being part of their experience. In its relation to the theory developed from the participants' viewpoints, it represented in essence what was not learned in their experiences, those aspects which were puzzling and unclear in their perceptions and of which their experiential patterns of change had not brought learning and understanding.

In my own interpretation I aimed to locate the questions which their views raised for me in a complementary theory exploring in more depth, as far as was possible, the underlying rationale for what was not learned, describing the obverse of the conscious process of learning and change, and giving greater understanding of the resistance to change which appeared as a central feature of the participants' stories.

In so far as this involved the proposition of phenomena of which the participants were unaware, it can only be conjecture since there was no means of exploring them further within the scope of inquiry. But the fact that there were for me incongruencies and contradictions in the participants' accounts which would never be made apparent if the interpretation was only grounded in the participants' understanding of themselves was a valid aspect of inquiry; and which could in essence only be conjecture, or at most tested in the evidence of the existing data.

Indeed, within a hermeneutic philosophy (see p.42 above) this was to be expected, and individual interpretation of the same phenomena are bound to differ, located in the concept of our own individual pre-conceptions. In order to make sense of these incongruencies and the participant's resistance to exploring them any further, I found myself adopting the conceptual framework developed in psychology to give understanding to the apparently inexplicable - the theories of the defensive workings of the unconscious.

(v) The pattern of 'not learning'

A closer look at the nature and form of the basic characteristic conflicts and associated coping patterns developed by participants, the aspects of personal experience at the heart of individual resistance to change, provided a starting point.

(a) The centrality of relationships

A first important discovery was to find that while in the main the characteristics and experiences developed in individual coping patterns were those associated with doing well in the world, with social values and the expectations of others, those avoided or suppressed were often those associated with the uncertainties and difficulties of fulfilling personal needs in relationships. A characteristic of the group as a whole was the lack of resolution in their needs for relationship in their personal life, except perhaps Sean who spoke of his long-standing relationship with Pat, with whom he lived.

(b) The paradoxes in relationships

A second discovery was that there was an intimate relationship between the kind of learning achieved by the three different groups in their lives and their attitudes towards personal relationship. Each group typically displayed a particular attitude, and associated paradox.

In the 'control' pattern of Alec and Sean for example, both avoided

talking about their feelings in relationships, even Sean although living with his long-standing girlfriend.

"I suppose after the first couple of brushes at love affairs or whatever I tended to take women rather lightly and regard them in whatever the crudest terms" says Alec, "... I've never been married, I've got close, very close, and I've lived with lots of ladies as well. But I've seen so much pain, suffering and hurt carried by people attempting to have long term relationships it put me right off. I don't want it ... I'd rather be out doing something. You've got a wild animal chained up! Within my own head I've been a loner for a very long time."

Both Alec and Sean deny that relationships are important to them in their development, and the coping patterns of each and accruing sense of success in life makes no mention of any part played by personal relationships in this. It is as if 'success' has nothing to do with their needs for relationship. And yet paradoxically, each of their stories tells of some kind of need for relationships, which in the case of Alec is full of contradiction. He denies that he wants anything other than a physical relationship, and yet he says has come close to marriage. It is a contradiction which his basic life conflict of alternating between a working class and a middle class identity, sustains in so far as he rejects the working class 'trap' of a council house marriage and children: "mortgages, kids, I don't want to know anything about that. I saw what it did to peasants" he says, but he also enjoys the social status of having a girlfriend. The contradiction is apparently a part of the coping pattern of change, and is never resolved by it.

In the second pattern, the 'compromise' pattern of Mary, Claire and Lorna, needs for personal relationship figure prominently in their lives, and all admit to it. But all accept through their learning that there are unavoidable difficulties in fulfilling their needs, accepting

the inevitability of conflict.

"I'm very strange in relationships" says Lorna. "Within the relationship I can't exert myself sufficiently and therefore I feel suppressed, but if I let myself go I would dominate too much ... But they don't organise life as I would want it, or do the things as I would want, so I become unhappy, and blame them ... It's a self-forced thing, I feel as if I'm tied but I'm tying myself ... I wish I were better able to communicate my feelings to other people more, but I've never been able to ... One problem is I'm a great sticker with it ... you stick with people far beyond what you should ... But I like doing my own thing and I enjoy being alone, and if I had to choose between being with other people all the time and being on my own I would choose to be on my own."

In theory Lorna would like to be able to assert herself more in her relationships, and to end them when she is bored, but accepts that as a 'Scorpio' she has tended to choose people whose attraction is their loyalty and devotion, and with attributes similar to her own. "Two have been the same star sign as myself, Scorpio, both born within one day of me ... you are both waiting, happy to accommodate and you end up with stalemate" she says. Although she resolves that in the future she will change her relationships as soon as this happens, she accepts the difficulties of communicating and asserting herself within the relationship itself, and continues to expect to feel frustration and boredom, and to choose and find partners who bring this rather than a satisfying long-term relationship. The contradiction is recognised, but the means of resolving it remains a problem.

In the third pattern, the 'happiness' pattern of Sara and Don, their pattern of learning is associated essentially with the recognition of their conflicts in personal relationships and an understanding of

the means of resolving them, and relationships are viewed as the focal issue.

In embarking on their coping patterns, each established relationships in which conflict accelerated into a concrete conflict with their partners, into crisis and the break-up of the relationship, but bringing in its wake an understanding of their own intrapersonal conflict and their part in the decline of their relationships. The paradox about this was for Don that he had never before been aware of his need for a close and caring relationship, and the emotional needs of others, nor Sara of her morbid dependence. Both avoided these issues for as long as they could, but learning through crisis and separation or divorce, the willingness to enter into new attitudes and behvaiours in personal relationships lies at the heart of their development and change.

(c) The origins in childhood

A third discovery was to find that the coping patterns and attitudes to relationships in adult life actually repeated and continued to uphold attitudes and behaviours developed in relationships with parents and family in childhood. And where these relationships were prohibitive to the realisation in perception and action of personal needs for relationship, the coping patterns developed led the individual into a vicious circle which continued to inhibit the development of the relationships which might help to resolve the undercurrent of frustration and conflict.

Alec's conflict for example is rooted in his contradictory feelings of loyalty and anger towards his parents, for refusing to allow him to go to college until he was self-supporting. "I was very angry for a long time" he says. "They cost me five years of my life". The contradiction in feelings is reflected in his attitudes towards women now - does he need them, or does he not? But in so far as his coping pattern

as a 'loner' forbids him to establish any long-term attachments, he is never, it seems, likely to develop a life-style in which his relationship with his parents can change, or the conflict in his identity become less important. Life is devoted to never exploring his conflicting feelings towards his parents or towards other people. Sean too speaks of turbulence in his childhood, and the beginnings of realising his 'negative reacting' side when his parents divorced while he was at primary school; but like Alec devotes his life to cultivating a self-image and identity which denies the importance of his emotional needs in relationships.

On the face of it, by avoiding the issue completely Sean and Alec fare better than Mary, Claire and Lorna, where the greatest uncertainty and difficulty in developing satisfactory relationships is made apparent. Here the whole issue of relationships is beset with problems, problems reflected in and entrenched in relationships with parents. Although never disloyal to or critical of their parents, each tells of their frustration in their home life, feeling unable to communicate with parents in their adolescence, or resenting the demands upon personal freedom imposed by family values. But ironically this sense of suppressed frustration is carried into their relationships in adult life - Lorna determined not to be dominating and demanding in her relationships, as she has been taught in the family. And although she recognises that she did not want to be bound by the family tie, Lorna still maintains it, feeling duty bound to support her mother and sister after the death of her father. In this group Lorna, Claire and Mary all feel frustrated in their needs for personal relationships, but maintain the loyalties and parental values which underly this frustration rather than reject them. Although each has moved from home, each maintains the identity of childhood and its associated frustrations. Mary especially seems burdened by this,

acknowledging her continuing 'hangup' about sexual relations, beginning in her youth, where she remembers that her parents never showed any physical attraction towards each other, where sex was not mentioned as if taboo.

While both the 'control' and 'compromise' groups seem locked into the conflicts and frustrations of their family relationships, it is significant that in the third group, Sara and Don establish in their learning an identity in which relationships with parents also change. Sara for example begins her adult life by pursuing in her own relationships the kind of mutual and unquestioning love she enjoyed in her relationships with her parents, and acknowledges her earlier dependence upon them. But through crisis and change her relationship with her parents also changes. She learns not to rely so much on their support, and recognises now that she visits them less often, as part of her new sense of independence.

(d) The forbidden territory

A fourth discovery was to find however that in all cases there was still a core of unquestioning acceptance of and reluctance to explore parental relationships in any greater depth, as if sacred ground which was never to be disturbed. Even in accepting his emotional needs for relationships and security and his earlier denial of these, Don is reluctant to go back over the ground of the past, explaining that he is "unable to reflect on it effectively". Whatever the form and quality of personal learning, there are aspects of personal experience in childhood which day to day awareness seems always of necessity to preserve unexplored.

(e) The pattern of 'not learning': interpretation of the underlying principle

As a result of these discoveries, I concluded that each individual's

rational interpretation of basic conflict still preserves unexplored to a greater or lesser extent the confused core of childhood experiences which are associated with conflicts in relationships with parents; and generally seeks to uphold feelings of acceptance and to conceal or avoid those which either imply a rejection by or of parents, and parental values.

The essence of the entire pattern lies by implication in the childhood dilemma of needing to love and accept and be accepted, and in being unable to tolerate to experience of rejection either by or towards parents, even when experience suggests that this is so. It is the principle to which all the patterns are bound, the principal source of the need for learning in life and of the means and constraints to its achievement, to the resistance to learning and change exemplified in the individual learning patterns and to its overthrow in crisis.

The basic conflicts which are understood by the individual are in themselves coping patterns, a means of coping on a conscious level with the unexplored conflicts in parental relationships. These become accessible through the experience of dissatisfaction, conflict crisis and decision at a day to day level when the way of coping with them, by asserting the positive parts of identity eventually brings learning and a degree of self-understanding.

But rarely if ever does this understanding break through to explore the hidden experiences at the root and heart of conscious experience. Sara's story suggests a slight variation to this in that her early experiences were not those of conflict but of complete love and acceptance in her parental relationships. Nevertheless, the attempt to preserve these feelings without ever questioning the values of her parents was to bring a characteristic conflict for Sara at a conscious level in her own relationships later on in life.

(f) The pattern of 'not learning': interpretation of 'levels' of learning

Since the whole pattern stems from and is geared to never exploring the experiences of childhood, to never actually experiencing the dilemma, 'development' might seem a pointless and predetermined exercise, always constrained from achieving completion and bound to continue in endless experiences of only partially-informed conflict and change. But the accounts of the group demonstrate three different ways in which individual choice is exercised to determine personal identity given this basic human predicament, ways which might be differentiated into 'levels' by virtue of the extent to which this choice opens up the experiences of childhood.

At the first level, the 'control' group, Alec and Sean exert a superhuman effort to forget unacceptable feelings in childhood, investing their energies in the pursuit of material success and recognition in their work, finding something to replace and so avoid these experiences and their legacy of self-doubt, of rejection perhaps or even failure. They live by riding above the conflicts, and although in their own minds they feel a sense of learning through the progressive development of their ability to survive, their patterns still avoid owning up to the experiences at the root of their conscious conflicts.

Of all the groups, I found that Alec and Sean were the most resistant to going back into the past, and assumed that their health depended upon looking forward and believing in their success. It is a risky strategy to choose perhaps, but preferable to the terror of experiencing whatever each so much fears.

At the second level, the 'compromise' group, Mary, Claire and Lorna each chooses to live with a partial understanding of themselves, finding strength and a positive sense of identity in maintaining parental values,

owning and accepting their intrapersonal conflicts, though still living in the fear of rejecting parental values and preferring to take the responsibility for their conflicts and frustrations upon themselves.

At the third level, the 'happiness' group, Sara and Don, choose to live by acknowledging their mistakes, by owning their childhood experiences without so much fear or guilt, by looking at themselves in a new light.

Actually being able to establish personal relationships in which the worst fears are realised is an essential aspect of the learning and freedom from the past which is experienced by Don and Sara. The question which the inquiry leaves unanswered in the light of this, is how each of the other groups might also find this freedom.

For Alec and Sean, will the way inevitably be through eventual crisis? How will each survive crisis if it ever happens?

For Lorna, Mary and Claire, will they continue for ever as they are, or will they eventually find the relationship in which their fears and guilts are absolved?

What other paths might bring learning?

For Lorna, the death of her father was a significant aspect of her recent experience of crisis, and she begins to experience the freedom from the 'family tie' as she finds her feet again. Don too speaks of the death of his father in recent years, and perhaps this too is significant in prompting learning and change, and the development of a new identity. Parental bereavement, distressing as it is, may be the most obvious and yet the least admissible source of personal learning and change, an important contributory factor, bringing a new life context where past is obviously and unavoidably past, where there is a natural and concrete experience of the beginning of a new era.

For Mary though the course of everyday life seems to bring no easy

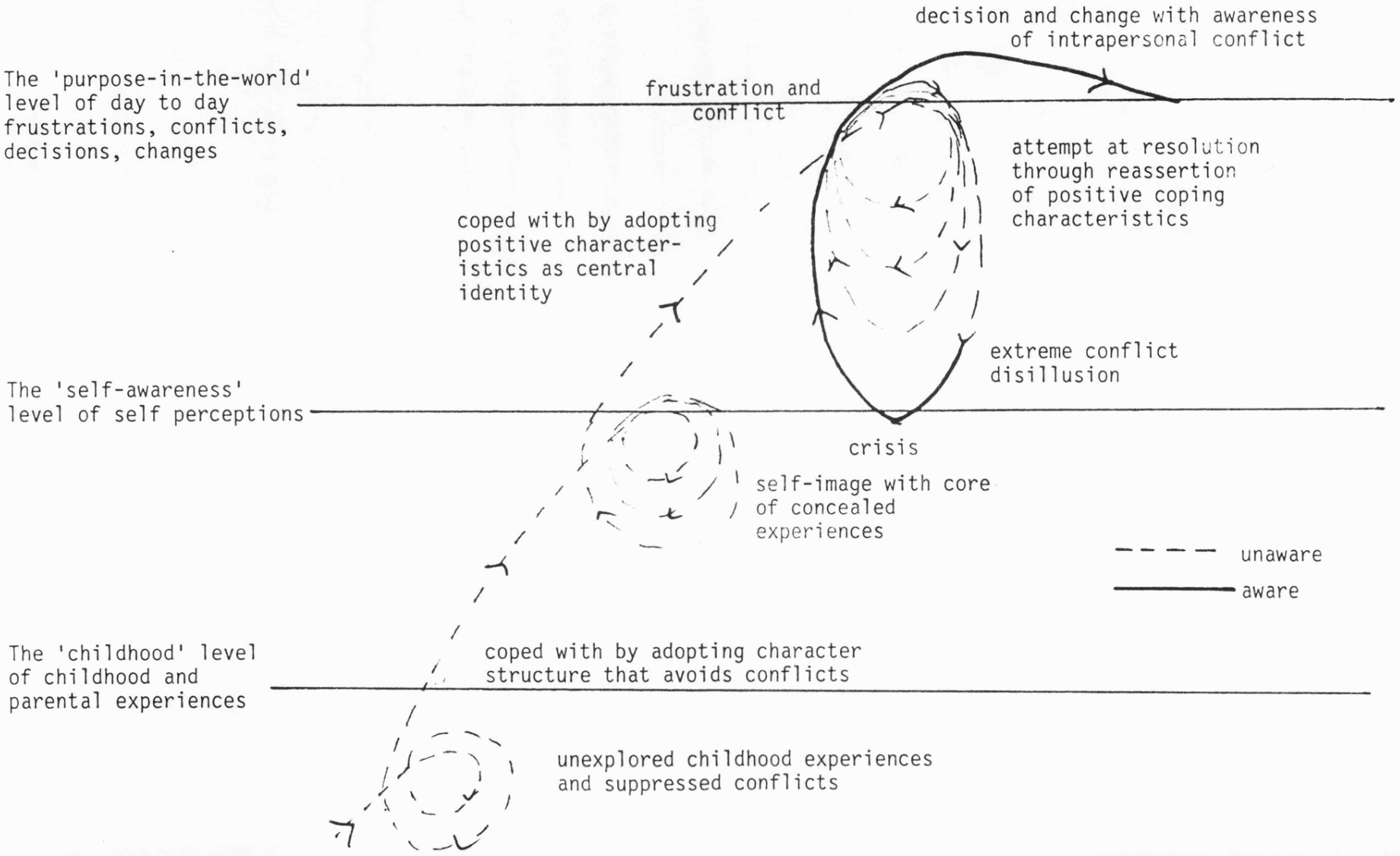
solution. Of all the participants, her story remains to give a sense of finding no way of resolving the conflicts which prompt her to both need a close personal relationship and yet reject her sexuality. Mary is fighting her hangup, she says, but something stops her in her fight. It is something perhaps that learning through living cannot resolve, but which assisted learning through therapy might help her to accept and find freedom from.

3. The theory integrating both perspectives: a summary

Combining the theory developed from the participants' perspectives, based upon a conceptualisation of learning as a process of developing a positive and powerful self-image, and my own perspective, based upon a conceptualisation of learning as a process of owning up to and coming to terms with the defensive fears and guilts laid down in childhood experience and in parental relationships, I would like to propose the following theory of personal development as learning through life.

1. The process of personal development through the first forty years of life is realised in everyday experience through the pursuit or 'quest' for a positive and complete experience of self, which is based upon experiences of happiness, satisfaction and success in work, home life and relationships and social life.
2. It is shaped by the experiences of satisfaction, frustration, conflict crisis and decisions to make circumstantial changes, which form our personal patterns of change, and divide our lives into stages delimited by experiential cycles of conflict and decision and change.
3. But it is also a process in which our experiential patterns of change made in the quest for a positive self-experience can bring self-awareness, self-understanding and sometimes personal change. It

The theory of development: the basic pattern (Figure 36)



is also a process of the unintended development of personal understanding of past actions and experiences, of discovering personal characteristics, of learning from experiences and determining the course of life, and of the achievement of personal aims and purposes through making changes in personal attitudes and behaviours.

4. The roots of each person's individual quest for a positive self-experience and of the personal learning and change achieved in the process are laid in the experiences of childhood and parental relationships. The process in its entirety extends through three levels of experiencing and layers of conscious life (Figure 36). These are, beginning with the earliest laid and least accessible level of experience:

   i. the 'childhood' level, associated with experiences in early parental relationships, consigned to unconscious life but potentially accessible through recall in later years.

   ii. the 'self-awareness' level, associated with rational perceptions of self as a logically ordered and comprehendable whole with a particular character structure and characteristic, attitudes and behaviours, accessible upon reflection in our day to day experiencing.

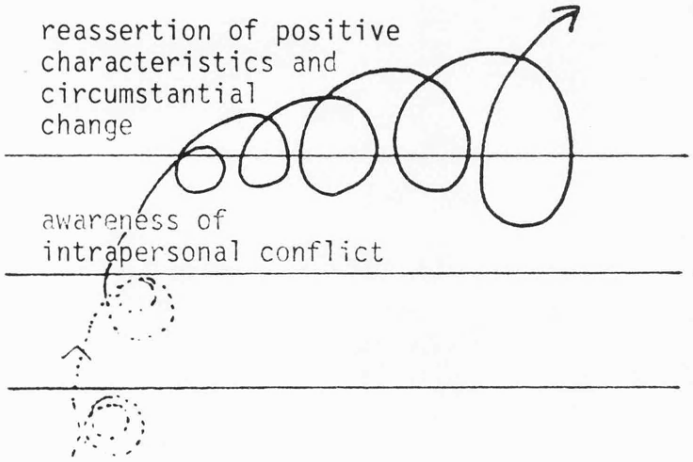
   iii. the 'purpose in the world' level, associated with the experiences and events, the satisfactions, conflicts and changes of our life in the world, as we go about the pursuit of our particular needs and hopes for happiness and success.

5. Development begins at the level of childhood experience with experiences in parental relationships and our innate needs for acceptance and fears of rejection.

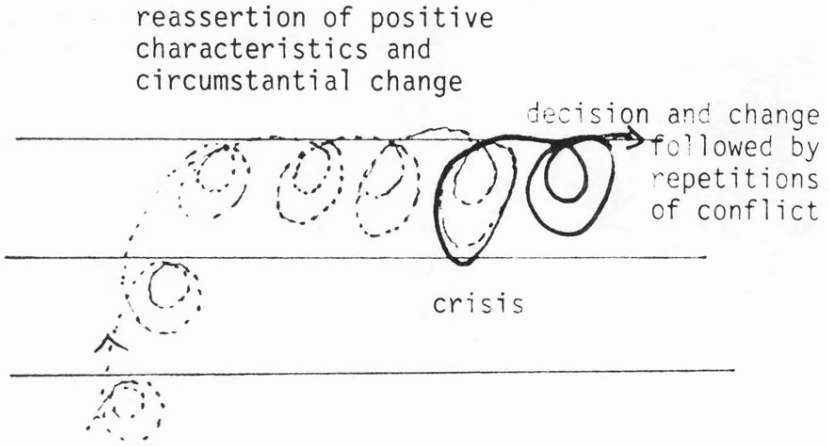
6. In accordance with our own particular experiences and personal attributes we each begin then to develop our individual character

structure which typically seeks to conceal and forget experiences of rejection or conflict with parents, and to emphasise and reinforce those characteristics which are acceptable to parents and give a sense of positive strength and worth, suppressing those associated with rejection, failure, and unacceptability.

7. In later life, this tendency to assert and reinforce the positive and idealistic aspects of identity becomes our characteristic 'coping' pattern of action in the world, and our way of relating to others. Typically we seek to pursue the conflict-free and guiltless aspects of our character in our purposeful activities in the world, and in our relationships. It is this pattern which directs our interests and decisions in our everyday life, in the 'purpose in the world' level of our experiencing.
8. As such, in our everyday experiencing we seek typically to avoid experiences of conflict and frustration, and when our positive identity is not confirmed by the experience of satisfaction, happiness or success, we re-assert with increased energy those attributes upheld in our coping patterns - sometimes by making the decision to change circumstances, sometimes choosing to stay in the present context.
9. With the repeated reassertion of our coping pattern, tending towards the maintenance and development of a positive, consistent and conflict-free identity, our suppressed characteristics always inevitably surface with time. Frustration may degenerate into the experience of conflict, and if circumstantial changes are resisted, then into personal crisis.
10. In crisis frustration and coping pattern engage in a vicious circle where the effect is to increase rather than decrease the strength of the frustrated characteristics and the gap between ideal self-



Alec and Sean: the control pattern of change without crisis (Figure 37)



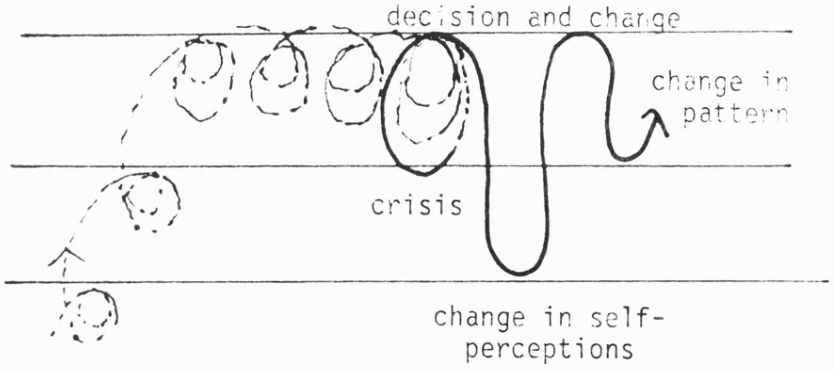
Claire, Mary and Lorna: the compromise pattern of change and crisis (Figure 38)

The theory of development:

the different patterns

unaware

aware



Sara and Don: the happiness pattern of change, crisis and personal change (Figure 39)

perceptions and actual self-experiencing widens. Either increasing effort is required to sustain the suppression of frustrated needs and potential, which grow the more they are suppressed and the eventual result is physical and psychological collapse; or the blind pursuit of an idealistic coping pattern frustrates itself, by actually destroying the external and concrete source upon which the experience of happiness and success depends.

11. The ultimate result of crisis is disillusionment, the acceptance of the falsity of personal perceptions, decision and circumstantial change and the establishment of a new actuality.

12. With change and recovery from crisis comes some kind of understanding of intrapersonal conflicts and coping patterns, sometimes with the capacity to make changes within them, and to develop an identity that accepts and owns and is yet independent of childhood experience, freed from the deterministic and constraining powers of the need to avoid and suppress experiences of conflict, fear, rejection and so on.

13. Three different forms of the developmental process with different kinds of learning are illustrated in the findings of inquiry. These are:

    i. The 'control' pattern of change without crisis (Figure 37). In this pattern, the experience of frustration is coupled with a horror of being caught in the experience of intrapersonal conflict at the level of 'self-awareness' and with the conscious choice to try to avoid the experience of conflict within oneself by riding above it, focusing attention of the level of 'purpose in the world'. The experience of frustration is followed by the decision to change circumstances rather than sit it out, a change which permits resumption of the coping pattern and avoidance of conflict. The experience

of development, of progressing in the personal quest comes through the demonstration of the personal ability to reassert the positive and successful self-image, and to fight and overcome conflicting emotions which threaten to open up the conflicts at the level of 'self-awareness' - although paradoxically the existence of such a conflict is known apparently from an early age.

Attention is focused on achievements at work associated with 'purpose in the world', and the pattern continues indefinitely as long as the ability to achieve and experience success is sustained through decision and circumstantial changes. It is a self-perpetuating pattern, each change never resolving but perpetuating the existence of the intra-personal conflict, and eventually leading again to frustration and to the reassertion of the coping pattern, and circumstantial change.

The pattern remains at the level of purpose in the world although perpetuates the unresolved conflicts of childhood experience upon which it is founded. It is a pattern in which personal relationships are not allowed to have any significant influence, and in which independence comes through the determination to never open up and reveal the experiences of the past and of childhood, and through the exercise of willpower and control.

ii. The 'compromise' pattern of change and crisis (Figure 38).

In this pattern the need to resolve the characteristic conflict at the level of self-awareness always persists and development is associated with the development of awareness of it.

The experience of frustration in a part of life at the level of purpose in the world leads first of all to minor changes which permit continuation of the coping pattern without a clear understanding of the underlying intra-personal conflict. With each

change the coping pattern is reasserted with increasing energy and with increasing resistance to change. Eventually a vicious circle of frustration and reassertion develops until broken by crisis.

Through crisis comes decision and circumstantial change, but with an acceptance of the impossibility of ever resolving the intra-personal conflict or of changing characteristic behaviours, and with the choice to compromise in expectations of total happiness and success rather than change attitudes and behaviours.

This pattern is associated invariably with the continuing experience of unresolved conflicts in personal relationships, and the assumption of a coping pattern that is bound to parental ideals and prohibitive to the development of satisfying personal relationships.

iii. The 'happiness' pattern of change, crisis and personal change (Figure 39).

In this pattern crisis develops as in the compromise pattern but brings with it a change in self-perceptions and behaviours, a sense of resolution of the underlying intra-personal conflict and a greater sense of openness and ease in perceptions of childhood and parental relationships. The features which differentiate this pattern from the compromise pattern are the experience of positive happiness and success, the realisation of ideals before crisis; the establishment and break-up of close personal relationships; the externalisation of conflict in a concrete situation; the more or less total blindness not only to personal characteristics but to the needs of others before the experience of crisis; and the sheer fact of having to find a new life-style, being thrown onto one's own resources and having to survive.

14. The process as a whole suggests that through the pursuit of con-

stancy and consistency will always come eventually decision and change, but that personal change in self is a more complex and elusive phenomenon. It may be experienced as change in the sense of improving existing positive qualities, increasing perceptions of personal strength (as in the 'control' pattern); or as change in the sense of a qualitative restructuring (as in the 'happiness' pattern), or simply as an increase in the content of personal self-awareness (as in the 'compromise' pattern). In the first two of these, the will and determination to learn is essential. In the control pattern this is associated with the determination to learn how to keep surviving successfully; and in the 'happiness' pattern, with the determination not to find oneself in the same situation of crisis again, but to profit from personal mistakes.

15. The process contains an inherent dialectic between the positive self-image, as a strength contributing to development and as a weakness constraining awareness and inhibiting change. It both suppresses the characteristics and experiences which through exploration might offer a route to development and a resolution of the perpetual sense of conflict; and it provides the means of survival and eventually, through persistent affirmation, the route to crisis and to personal change and development.

16. The crucial human characteristic essential to survival is the capacity to continue the affirmation of the positive self-image. The crucial characteristics essential to personal change are the capacities to relinquish this self-image, to experience the weaknesses of it and to find a new form of identity which is a synthesis of old and new, of weakness and strength, of childhood and adulthood.

17. The process of development through life is never ending in so far as the core of childhood experiences remains by and large undiscovered;

and every new synthesis brings with it a new interpretation of the past which continues to influence present attitudes and behaviours; and brings with it new potential for the definition of what constitutes 'success' and 'happiness', and for the frustration of this. As long as time passes, and as long as we never rid ourselves of our defensive processes in their entirety, the pattern of development must continue.

CHAPTER 8

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW: SOME LITERARY COMPARISONS

In this chapter I shall review the theory developed through the two projects, first by considering the relationship between the two theories, and secondly by comparing the findings as a whole with other theories of learning, development and change. My aim in the first case is to review the generalisability of the first theory in the light of the findings of the second project (see p.161 above); and in the second, to highlight some of the essential and original features of the findings as a whole, of the second project in particular, through exploring similarities and differences with a wider literary context.

1. A review of the two theories

Commencing the second project, I had decided not to base the experiential inquiry directly on the theory of the four cycles of identity developed in the first (Cycle A: 'I am and I can', Cycle B: 'I am and I can, but ...', Cycle C: 'I AM AND I CAN', and Cycle D: 'Am I? Can I?') - but to review their application to the findings of the second project in retrospect.

The findings of the second project generally give support to the view that identity may be described in terms of the relationship between the individual's perceptions and evaluation of self, and particular way(s) of experiencing and coping with conflict; and to the view that the development of identity through life, the process of self-awareness and change, may be circumscribed by experiential 'cycles' of conflict, decision and circumstantial change. In the second project, the individual's particular pattern of conflict and capacity to change from one kind of pattern to another are located in the context of unresolved conflicts persisting from childhood, and of a general dialectical con-

flict between the need to sustain a positive self-image and the ability to repress and suppress negative aspects of personal experience in the process.

As far as the capacity to change from one kind of cycle to another is concerned, the findings of the second project suggest :

i. That the experiences of Cycle B and Cycle C are the most prevalent, and are more constant than the experience of Cycles A and D, and that identity tends towards one or the other of these, as a 'main' cycle;

ii. That the experience of Cycle A and Cycle D nevertheless plays a part in the pattern of change from any kind of cycle to another; and that

iii. It is possible, although unusual to experience change from one kind of cycle to another.

All of the second group, with the exception of Alec and Sean, exemplify the experience of Cycle B at the time of the project, Sara and Don exemplifying a 'mature' form where the form of the underlying conflict has changed, and Mary, Claire and Lorna an 'immature' form where the original childhood conflict still persists unresolved. Alec and Sean in contrast exemplify the forceful Cycle C, a pattern sustained to date through their lives.

The depression and uncertainty of Cycle D is typically experienced in the process of decision and change, and is apparent in the descriptions of crises endured by the exponents of Cycle B, in the experience of extreme conflict before the decision is made to take action to change. It is interestingly also a subsidiary cycle within the Cycle C experience of Alec, and more particularly Sean, always potentially present and always forcefully suppressed as a part of the characteristic conflict experienced by the individual.

Glimpses of the unqualified happiness and success appear in most of the patterns, but only Sara experiences this as a main cycle, during the earlier part of her life. Only Sara too experiences a change from one main cycle to another, from Cycle A to Cycle B through her life, suggesting perhaps that the experience of Cycle A can mask a conflict which is yet to erupt.

In conclusion, the 'cycles' of the findings of the first project provide a means of mapping in greater detail the total process of decision and change explored in the second, and a means of conceptualising the central and subsidiary experiences of self associated with the pattern of learning and change through the experience, and sometimes through the resolution of personal conflicts. The findings of the two projects are complementary, the first providing a character typology, and the second a perspective of individual conflicts and patterns of change.

2. Comparisons with existing theories

In the choice of literature for comparison I was guided both by my initial interests when setting out on inquiry (see Chapter 2 above), and by the findings. I found that there were three different kinds of theories and perspectives appropriate for comparison:

1. The perspective of personal development as a natural phenomenon continuing through the course of life.
2. The perspective of personal development as a 'learned' phenomenon in itself, where deliberate strategies are employed to assist the natural process where it breaks down.
3. The perspective of development in terms of abstract learning processes, providing a more highly conceptualised view of the form of development.

I shall take each of these perspectives in turn, identifying similarities and differences of the findings in relation to specified authors.

2.1 Development as a natural phenomenon

In this section I shall refer to the ideas of Jung and Maslow, who were influential in helping to establish the picture of wholeness and growth with which I began inquiry (see pp.30-33 above), and Erikson (1967, 1968) and Levinson (1978) who both provide a more highly differentiated conceptualisation of development through life in terms of life stages.

(i) Jung (1953, 1954, 1959a, 1959b)

Jung provides a dual perspective of development as both a natural and a learned phenomenon, in so far as the development of personality is undertaken through inner necessity, and is a matter of a personal calling towards the affirmation of all that is uniquely personal in oneself, which culminates less so than not in the phenomenon of 'individuation', an ideal which is unattainable in its entirety, says Jung (1954).

The process of development is described by Jung (1954, 1959a) as a fight between the conscious and unconscious life of the individual, between the calling for self-realisation of the parts in unconscious experience, and social ideals of conscious life. Individuation moreover is not a matter of becoming more 'individual', says Jung, but of becoming at one with society - a process aided by the recognition and assimilation into conscious experience of the contents of the anima, the animus, the shadow and the archetypes of the collective unconscious, in the process of individuation.

This assimilation demands, says Jung, the development of relationship(s) with another, and with another of the opposite sex in the discovery and acceptance of femininity and masculinity as aspects of oneself, and the recognition of one's own projection of these qualities onto others (1959b).

In its most highly developed stages, individuation is described

as a spiritual or religious journey in mid-life towards encounter and union with the symbols of the unconscious, where may be found the unity and meaning of our lives, a journey typically made in psychoanalysis in the wake of the experience of crisis, the experience of a need to find a meaning beyond the mask of social identity.

The findings of inquiry generally mirror the view that development is at heart a process of uncovering and discovering hidden aspects of ourselves. Although the idea of a consignment to the unconscious in childhood is more in keeping with Freud's view than Jung's, where the parts have always been unconscious, the stories of Sara and Don give a glimpse into the natural process of the emergence of the anima and animus in the wake of crisis in relationships with the opposite sex - Sara accepting her (masculine) independence and capacity for self-assertion, and Don his (feminine) capacity for loving and caring. The resolution of all individual conflict sets demands in essence the assimilation of the 'shadow' - the parts the individual is not proud of and does not perceive as strong and positive or acceptable.

In the findings however individuation appears as a more complex process, in so far as our ability to repress our particular and individual characteristic experiences may, in so doing, inhibit acceptance of the archetypes. Development demands unravelling the dialectic between the process of individual defences and the influence of consignments to unconsciousness in childhood and the calling of the shadow, the anima and animus, to become conscious. On the evidence of the findings our defensive repressions tend to gain the upper hand to inhibit individuation.

The spiritual journey too never appears in isolation but always in dialectic. Some of those who speak of a spiritual calling (Alan and Mark in the first project) are those who are the most obviously

locked into the search for social success associated with the 'I AM AND I CAN' of Cycle C. Life and learning never transcends the need to prove oneself in the world, and strivings for success are no less part of the 'real' self than the archetypes, nor more a 'persona'. In inquiry there can perhaps be no lasting integration.

(ii) Maslow (1943, 1954, 1968, 1971)

Throughout his work Maslow is concerned with defining and describing what constitutes the 'healthy' person. With the premise that the process of growth is ordered by the principle that as each of our needs is satisfied another takes its place (1968: 55), Maslow depicts growth in his earlier work at least as a hierarchical progression through the satisfaction of basic needs for the body, for safety, love and self-esteem to the 'highest' need for self-actualization, being all that one can be (1943). He distinguishes between people who are 'deficiency' motivated, seeking satisfaction of their basic needs, and people who are growth motivated, seeking self-actualization and the full use of their capacities and talents.

Although in his later work he softens the hierarchical distinction, and suggests that all needs are potentially present through our lives, and that self-actualization is more of an episodic phenomenon, his definitions of what constitutes the self-actualizing person, with the accompanying characteristics of 'Being cognition' (1968, 1971) typically tend towards the concept of the transcendence of basic needs, of the opinions of others, of own values, weaknesses and conflicts; and tend towards an even finer differentiation between for example 'self-actualizing transcenders', and 'self-actualizing non-transcenders' (1971: 270ff). In transcendence, life is lived for the 'Being values' of truth, goodness and beauty and so on (1971: 308), as an end in itself rather than a means to something else.

While the findings of inquiry reflect the idea that as one particular kind of need in the most general sense is satisfied, another comes to the fore, they refute both the simplicity and the elitism of Maslow's hierarchy, and give no evidence of the actuality of the perfect self-actualizing transcender. Even when life is lived with relatively less conflict, as in the Cycles A of the first project, needs for social recognition, for love and worldly relationships are still important to the individual.

The findings imply that both a more complex definition of 'needs' is required to take into account the total complex of conflict experienced by the individual at any one time, and that a more dialectical notion of progression to and from any kind of need to another is demanded. Even accepting that self-actualization in Maslow's terms is a phenomenon of maturity, it remains a sterile ideal. In inquiry, needs for love and self-esteem, with all of their attendant conflicts, are the stuff of life and learning.

(iii) Erikson (1967, 1968) and Levinson (1978)

Both of these writers present theories which although substantially different in content, both present the process of development as an accumulative process of identity through defined ages and stages of life.

For Erikson the process is devoted to the achievement of a sense of the continuity in personal experience, which is also recognised by others (1968: 50), to a sense of mastery in the world (1968: 69), and to the acceptance of oneself and one's existence (1968: 74), and to a strong, integrated ego. It is based on the 'epigentic principle', which Erikson defines as follows: (1968)

> "Somewhat generalised, this principle states that anything that grows has a ground plan and that out of this ground plan the parts arise, each part having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole". (p.92)

The ground plan is a series of 'psycho-social gains' which the individual develops at different ages and specified stages, as the result of incipient maturational conflicts experienced in our participation in socially defined institutions through our lives. In young adulthood for example, the conflict lies between intimacy and isolation, and results in the development of capacities for affiliation; in adulthood between generativity and stagnation, resulting in productivity and care (1967: 255-268).

In Levinson too (1978) life is ordered by an underlying structure, here divided into six or seven year periods of stability alternating with four to five year periods of transition. The personal process is that of the developing integration of self and world through its social institutions, towards individuation in mid-life, much in the general sense described by Jung, as former social goals are questioned and polarities or conflicts within oneself are transcended (1978: 333).

The dynamics of the process are provided by inherent developmental tasks, which have common characteristics as tasks associated either with the structure-building stable periods, or the periods of transition. Levinson writes (1978):

> "The major developmental tasks of a structure-building period are to make crucial choices, to create a structure around them, to enrich the structure and pursue goals within it... In a transitional period, the major tasks are to reappraise the existing structure, to explore new possibilities in self and the world, and to work towards choices that provide a basis for a new structure" (p.317)

The tasks of the structure building periods move through finding a direction in life, to establishing a sense of self-sufficiency towards individuation, and transition is characterised by the experience of loss and separation.

Both of these theories offer a backdrop of a total process of development through a rhythmic pattern of circumstantial changes through

life, which might be seen alongside rather than in contradiction of the cyclical pattern of change emerging in the findings of inquiry. Both stress that the pattern is not hierarchical, and that the potential for the experience of each kind of conflict or task is present through our lives. The findings as a whole support the view that new experiences and developments arise from those preceding, as in epigenesis.

But the findings generally present a view of development as one which is less specifically determined by a common structure than by the individual him/herself. The future in inquiry cannot be predicted, and the conflicts or tasks of any one period are defined in terms of personal characteristics and experiences, rather than as shared by all. If there is any ground-plan, it is the inevitability of resistance and the pursuit of this to the extreme.

In the findings, the whole process of conflict and change is set in the context of a personal dialectic between past influences and present experiences, between conscious and unconscious experience, moving towards an integration and a redefinition of these in the light of new experiences. The central points of interest in the findings, how we make the change from one kind of cycle or experience to another, through repeated resistance and crisis, and how this sometimes accelerates personal change and sometimes not, find little parallel in the theories of Erikson and Levinson. Erikson speaks of each stage as a crisis but more by virtue of the underlying change in direction that is required (1968: 95) rather than in terms of a definable and explicit personal experience of distress and disillusion. Levinson touches on the issues of loss in association with events characterising the periods of transition, such as divorce and change of job, but neither explore in any depth the relation between the dynamics of the end of one stage and the start of another, and the contribution made to the total process of individual learning and change.

With these thoughts in mind, I should like to turn next to therapeutic approaches to personal learning and change.

2.2 Development as a 'learned' phenomenon

In the therapies generally some interesting comparisons arise with the conceptualisation of learning as a process occasioned at heart by, and occasioned through, the experience of resistance - resistance to owning and being those aspects of oneself which threaten one's positive self-image, and the secondary resistance that this brings with it, a resistance to change from set patterns of perceiving and acting in the world. They differ in their individual definitions of what constitutes the resistance, and how this may be overcome through the techniques of therapy. In this section I shall refer to the work of Rogers (1967, 1969), Watzlawick et al. (1974), Fisch et al (1982), Perls et al. (1974), and Postle (1980), and to the specific methods described by each. But there is in all one important difference from the findings which should be borne in mind. In therapy a resistance is typically associated with pathology in perception, with ill-health and perhaps neurosis, with the extreme experience of conflict within oneself. Whereas in the findings, resistance appears as an aspect of healthy life, essential to the course of learning through life.

(i) Rogers (1967, 1969)

In Rogers' therapy, the aim is to enable the individual to become 'fully functioning', characterised by such qualities as openness and closeness to one's own experience; acceptance of the changing flow of feelings and emotions, rather than repressing and suppressing them and speaking in depersonalised abstractions about oneself; trusting in one's ability to make the right choices (1967: 183-196). This is assumed to not only help the individual to cope with the psychological difficulties of everyday living, but to assist in the process of, for

example, classroom learning, where the individual is required to make and take responsibility for choices and for his/her learning (1969).

The resistances to be overcome are primarily the individual's fears of his/her own feelings, and the process of development takes place essentially in a close interpersonal relationship between therapist and client, where the therapist's ability to trust in his/her own experience and to accept the client as they are, enables the client to begin to trust in self, to become aware of feelings and personal conflicts, to accept them and achieve a congruence between thoughts, their expression, and feelings (1967: 63-64).

It is a process which essentially demands the loosening of cognitive maps and the adoption of more flexible constructs in perception, moving from a rigid view of the world to a view which can accommodate change with each new experience (1967: 64).

In comparison with the findings of the inquiry, parallels may be drawn between Rogers' fully-functioning person and the experiences of Sara and Don after crisis, while Alec and Sean in particular appear to exemplify the greater rigidity and repressions of the other extreme.

An interesting difference however may be found in the role played by interpersonal relationships in the process of development. Relationships are important, but not as sources of catalytic trust and empathy. In the inquiry the role of the other is to disturb, to sow the seeds of distrust and to help to precipitate learning through crisis and disillusion. Nor are close secure relationships essential to recovery, both Sara and Don recovering through falling almost entirely on their own resources. It may be indeed that trusting relationships would bring learning and development for the other participants, in so far as they maintain patterns which apparently inhibit the development of any kind of close relationship. But to see if and how this happens is sadly

beyond the scope of inquiry.

(ii) Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch (1974); Fisch, Weakland and Segal (1982

A rather different approach with parallels of a different nature may be found in the work of Watzlawick and colleagues at the 'Brief Therapy' Center.

Their therapy is aimed at helping clients to resolve problems in everyday life which take the form of impasses, deadlocks or vicious circles, where the individual typically experiences a difficulty and undertakes actions or a solution which is unsuccessful in resolving the difficulty, and yet persists repeatedly and often unawarely in applying more of the same solution (1974: 39ff; 1982: 12-14).

The focus for treatment is not however the resistances underlying the formation of the problem in the first place, but the attempted solution. The client is invited to 'reframe' the problem, so that another solution may be possible or so that the situation is no longer evaluated negatively as a problem. Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch write (1974):

> "To reframe then means to change the conceptual and/or emotional setting or viewpoint in relation to which a situation is experienced and to place it in another frame which fits the 'facts' of the same concrete situation equally well or even better, and thereby changes is entire meaning ... what turns out to be changed as a result of reframing is the meaning attributed to a situation and therefore the consequences, but not the concrete facts". (p.195)

The kind of techniques employed are designed to encourage the client to adopt actions and perceptions which are different from and preferably the opposite of those inherent in the attempted solution (Fisch, Weakland and Segal, 1982: 115); and will involve increasing or heightening the problem that the client is trying to avoid. In anorgasmia for example, the client is instructed to avoid any kind of feelings of arousal; in a fear of driving, to sit in a parked car and not think of any of the joys of driving (1982: 129-173).

There are some obvious similarities between this definition of a problem and strategies for change with the repetitive cycles of conflict perpetuated by coping patterns, and the process of change through pursuing these to the extreme, as described in the findings of inquiry. Again, the stories of Sara and Don are pertinent, each experiencing personal learning and change through experiencing the one thing that their coping strategy is designed to avoid, the experience of rejection in relationships. And with learning comes a new construing of the past, a reframing albeit after the event rather than before.

But the findings also imply that when a problem has a positive aspect and embraces the whole character structure, change in the sense of personal change is difficult to achieve simply by for example reinforcing the problematic coping pattern, or by seeing the problem no longer as a negative problem. The real problem here, as in the cases of Alec and Sean, is accepting that there is a problem at all, and strategies which deny the negative aspect of the problem or substitute another coping pattern may well be in themselves mistaken solutions, vicious circles of deeper implication and complexity.

The findings imply that as a method for radical and lasting personal change, reframing may need recourse to other philosophies of the unconscious in order to help define what the problem actually is, and in order to get beyond the vicious circle of resolving one problem by creating another.

(iii) Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1974)

In the 'gestalt' therapy developed by these practitioners, the targets are the 'blocks', 'rigidities' and 'resistances' (1974: 16, 64, 73), the defensive strategies, the fears and guilts which are thought to distort our perceptions of ourselves and others, but the philosophy and methods of the approach are set in context of the gestalt perspective of perception.

The basic theory is that we know ourselves through our 'contact' with the world, through finding our boundaries through our perceptions and actions, but live as such in a relationship of perpetual change and potential conflict as we each seek to survive by growing, by assimilating that which is other than ourselves, with mind and body. In normal circumstances the process is regulated by our capacity to adjust and accommodate, and by the gestalt ordering of our experience, in which as one need comes to the fore it becomes the complete figure before receding to allow another to take its place.

The problem is that we may fall prey to defensive strategies which prompt us to try to simplify the process, actualising an ideal rather than ourselves (1974: 10), repressing parts of ourselves and losing sight of the boundary between parts, adopting rigid behaviours which block aspects of ourselves and help to create 'unfinished' figure-ground formations (1974: 15), disturbing our sense of equilibrium within ourselves and creating unresolved inner conflict, and perhaps neurosis (1974: 173).

The aim of therapy is to bring back the boundary of demarcation, the awareness of part as parts (1974: 155); and involves contacting the different aspects of present experiencing, differentiating between for example the sensations of the body, emotions and thoughts at different levels of abstraction, and destroying and overcoming the blocks which create such pathologies as 'retroflection' (where behaviour originally directed towards others is directed towards self) (1974: 183); 'introjection' (where behaviour which does not belong to one's self is seen as one's own) (1974: 230); and 'projection' (where personal attributes are projected onto another) (1974: 254).

The general theory that our experience is ordered as a series of changing gestalts in which repression and defensiveness may create

'unfinished' situations which persist to disrupt the present is reflected in the theory developed in inquiry, in the cycles of persisting conflict, similarly the notion that development beyond this requires some kind of destruction of the status quo. But in contrast to the therapeutic view, the findings imply that repression may bring about its own destruction in time, and the unfinished situation may complete itself, as happens for Sara and Don.

Nor does the learning in the findings come through a systematic focusing on the parts in present experience, but in reflection after a total investment in the confluence of parts, in the unfinished situation to the point that it disintegrates, and the parts are recognised as they fall into new positions, a new whole, after the event. In the therapy the parts define a new whole; in the findings the whole defines new parts.

(iv) Postle (1980)

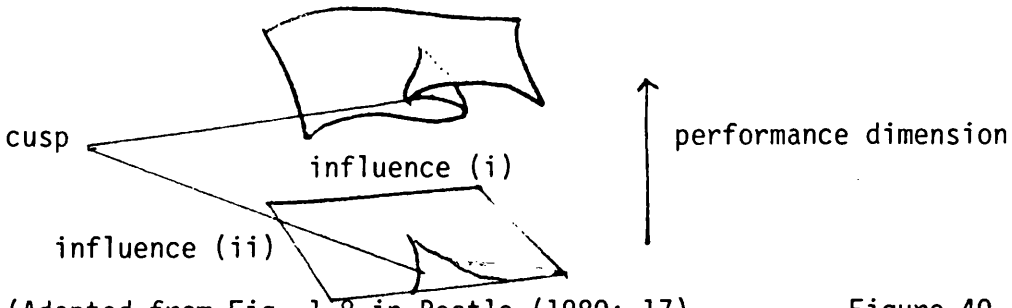
I should like to consider finally in this section Postle's development of 'catastrophe theory' (1980), in its application to Janov's 'primal' therapy (Janov, 1973; Janov and Holden, 1976).

'Catastrophe theory', originally discovered by Thom (1974) and developed as a branch of mathematics provides a three-dimensional model of a folded surface which describes change as a function of a performance in a context of two interacting influences. Postle writes (1980):

> "Catastrophe theory tells us that if there are sudden jumps in behaviour governed by two independent influences, then a graph of the range of behaviour resulting from all possible interactions of the two influences can be drawn and this graph will be a folded surface in three dimensions." (p.13)

While there are many different possible forms of the catastrophe, the 'cusp' catastrophe is of especial interest. Postle develops the model to demonstrate how, in its application to individual behaviour, an individual may be viewed in a location at any point on the surface,

and, depending upon this position, may in a change of influence be precipitated into the fold of cusp into a changing process of catastrophe (1980: 114).



(Adapted from Fig. 1.8 in Postle (1980: 17) Figure 40

He demonstrates this by reference to Janov's 'primal therapy' (1973, 1976), where the definition of performance in question is 'access to primal pain'. Based on the philosophy that pain and stress are endemic in our lives, and that either too much access to it or too much distance from it can bring ill-health and neurosis - remoteness bringing the pathologies of repression, and proximity an overload of stress - the therapy typically aims to precipitate the individual into pain beyond the limits of defences, beyond the hope of resolution. With the collapse of the defences sustaining the stress, an acute anxiety attack is experienced, with the re-experiencing of the suppressed pain of early life. After a period of grief and anguish, a further 'recovery' catastrophe enables the individual to return in time to a stable defended position once more (Postle, 1980: 121-124).

While the causal implications of such a model, that the manipulation of precise influences are responsible for individual change, are not appropriate to the self-directed and holistic philosophy of inquiry, the model as described does however have some interesting applications to the findings. Assuming that the two main influences in question are the conflicts experienced by the individual, and the coping pattern adopted. and the dimension of performance in question is the individual's capacity for learning, for self-awareness and change, each of the patterns

described in inquiry might be located at a point on the surface of the graph, with varying proximity to catastrophe with each change in [illegible] conditions. A change in the experience of conflict in day to day life, an acceleration into inter-personal conflict, precipitates Sara and Don into catastrophe (although slowly rather than suddenly), beyond the aid of their coping pattern, to experience extreme anxiety before recovery comes in time with the establishment of a new coping pattern. Others maintain a position avoiding the cusp by accentuating their coping (Alec and Sean); or experience less dramatic catastrophes which permit a reversion to a previous position (Claire, Mary and Lorna). Of all the approaches described, the model of catastrophe theory in its application to Janov's therapy in its broadest form, has the closest parallels to the notion of learning and change through precipitation into crisis, albeit slowly.

2.3 Development and learning theory

There are two perspectives of learning which I found interesting in the light of inquiry, both of which are discussed by Bateson (1973, 1980). The first is the conceptualisation of learning in terms of 'cybernetic' systems, with capacities both for self-regulation and for degeneration into negative vicious circles, amplified by reference to Maruyama (1963) and Hampden-Turner (1971). The second is the notion of 'levels' of learning, amplified by reference to Merleau-Ponty (1967) and Argyris and Schon (1978).

(i) Learning and cybernetics

In the models of 'cybernetics', the branch of mathematics associated with self-regulating and equilibriating systems characterised by mutual causality between elements influencing each other simultaneously or alternately (Maruyama, 1963: 164), or concerned with the problems of control, recursiveness and information (Bateson, 1980: 241), some para-

llels may be found with the general form of the experiential cycles emerging in inquiry.

An essential aspect of the systems described by Maruyama and Bateson is their capacity to take two different basic forms:

a. to process information/to interact so that the direction is set and the system is 'self-corrective', 'homeostatic', 'convergent' (Bateson, 1973: 287; 1980: 191), or 'counteracting deviation' (Maruyama, 1963: 164).

b. to process information/to interact so that the system changes, perhaps going into 'runaway' (Bateson, 1973: 287) and is 'divergent' (Bateson, 1980: 191), or 'deviation-amplifying' (Maruyama, 1963: 164).

A third form, c., of 'oscillation' between the two (Bateson, 1973: 287) or of 'random drift' (Maruyama, 1963: 170), is also possible, with potentially endless variations.

In Maruyama's model, the difference between a. and b. is explained in terms of increasing and decreasing feedback loops and networks (1963: 175ff). The system consists in essence of elements which either increase or decrease others, which in turn lead to an increase or decrease in the former, either directly or through a series of increasing or decreasing elements. In a deviation counteracting system, any random change in the size of an element is counteracted by the mutual causality of the system, as then an increase in population leads to an increase in disease which leads to a decrease in population. In a deviation amplifying system, any change in an element is amplified by the interaction, as when an increase in population leads to an increase in sanitation facilities which leads to a decrease in bacteria which leads to an increase in population.

Deviation amplification is not necessarily pathological, but is

experienced as such when it fails to reduce conflict within the system, as in neurosis for example when a loss of self-confidence and poor performance mutually increase each other to the detriment of personal health (Maruyama, 1963: 178). A similar process is described in Hampden-Turner's model of perception and identity (1971), where a strong identity with clear and accurate perceptions leads to a positive increase in the individual's capacity to take action in the world, and to accept feedback, and so facilitating the development of cognitive structures which in turn strengthen identity and increase the quality of perception, and so on; while an identity that has become stagnant and 'locked-in' typically leads to a diminishing ability to take action, to accept feedback, and to increasingly impoverished perceptions and so on (Rowan, 1973: 101-103).

The critical aspects are obviously where and how the random change occurs, and the nature and number of the elements, and their relative strengths increasing or decreasing another. In the findings of inquiry it would seem that all of the cyclical patterns demonstrate a form of deviation-amplification between conflict and coping pattern, an increase in conflict typically leading to a strengthening of the coping pattern, in turn increasing the experience of conflict in the form of a vicious circle. The crucial differences between those cycles which reach an end and those which do not lie in the influences which accentuate the conflict to the point that it far outweighs the coping pattern, to bring collapse, changes in environmental conditions and the secondary 'loops' of deterioration in physical health or conflict in interpersonal relationships that the vicious circles generate, to add to the conflict.

The findings also demonstrate the complexities which arise when the basic process is set in the context of a perceptual dialectic between positive and negative evaluation. For when coping patterns suffice,

there may be little awareness of conflict, and life is experienced either in a positive deviation amplifying context, progressively getting better and better, as Sean and Alec declare; or in a deviation-counteracting context of self-correction, where a stable and constant 'neutral' position is maintained, as for example Claire and Lorna, before crisis sets in. But after the experience of crisis, the same pattern is seen as negative and deviant, as the conflict is realised. In any learning context involving a change in personal awareness and a reinterpretation of the past, an oscillation between forms seems likely.

(ii) Levels of learning

Finally I would like to consider the relevance of theories of 'levels of learning', developed on the basis of the Theory of Logical Types originally developed by Whitehead and Russell (1910), which states in essence that a class and its members are of a different level of abstraction, and that a class cannot be a member of itself, nor a member be the class (Bateson, 1973: 174, 250). In learning theory, this differentiation is carried into the phenomenology of perception, where it is assumed that we know something by virtue of its meaning for us, its reference to something else. And in learning, this something else may vary in the quality and complexity of its abstraction. The greater the complexity, then typically the higher the level and the more sophisticated the learning.

This is exemplified in Merleau-Ponty's differentiation (1967: 103ff) between i. the 'syncretic' forms of life where behaviour is viewed as a conditioned response to expected concrete conditions and rarely varies; ii. the 'amovable' forms characterised by 'signal' behaviour, where a stimulus is perceived as a sign for something else, and the meaning is divorced from the context of its appearance, and a similar choice of behaviour is made when presented with the same sign under different

conditions, although the sign is only recognised if it is the same; and iii. the 'symbolic' forms of human life, where signs are interchangeable and symbolise a further gestalt of meaning which is distinct from and does not depend for its existence on any one sign, and where behaviour itself creates new signs.

It is reflected in Bateson's differentiation (1973: 250ff) between i. 'zero' learning, where there is no abstraction and no change in a response; ii. 'learning I', where change in response is possible, where the total context of the stimulus provides a 'meta-message' classifying the signal and errors may be perceived and corrected by a change in behaviours within a limited set of alternatives; iii. 'learning II' where a change is made on the basis of the perception of a change in the set of alternatives; and iv. 'learning III', exemplified by a change in behaviours on the basis of perception of change in the set of alternatives as a whole.

Argyris and Schon (1978: 18ff) differentiate similarly between i. 'single loop learning' where corrective changes are made to maintain the system and its norms; ii. 'double loop learning', where the norms are questioned and changed in the process; and iii. 'deutero-learning' where changes in norms are set in the context of a new order, with new language or coding.

In all the crucial elements are the extent and range of alternatives for active change, in combination with the perception of yet further orders of meaning, and the development of complexity in the context in which action takes place.

In the findings of inquiry it is apparent that all of the learning patterns exemplify initially at least Bateson's 'learning I' and Argyris and Schon's 'single-loop' learning, the maintenance of the status quo through self-corrective changes. The patterns of the 'compromise' group,

Mary, Claire and Lorna approach Bateson's 'learning II' and Argyris and Schon's 'double loop' learning, where there is a questioning of existing norms and at least an awareness of other choices of action. But only the patterns of Sara and Don come anywhere near the total transformation of norms and understanding of the process of the past exemplified by Bateson's 'learning III' and Argyris and Schon's 'deutero-learning', a change in the whole basis of meaning and actions, a new way of looking at life.

This last comparison reflects the emerging tendency of the review as a whole, to present a hierarchical view of learning where the Cycle C, 'control' patterns exemplified by Alec and Sean in the second project, typically display the least learning; where the Cycle B 'compromise' patterns of Mary, Claire and Lorna display the intermediate level; while the 'happiness' patterns of Sara and Don display the greatest learning.

But to make this assumption ignores the dialectical notion of learning emerging in the findings, and the ability that individuals demonstrate, to change from one level to another. It is to forget the individual's own evaluation of the positive aspects in any of the experiential patterns, and the particular experiential qualities which may be found in any kind of cycle, as exemplified both in the first project and the second.

The findings point generally to a need for a more dialectic conceptualisation of any 'hierarchy' of learning and change - dialectical in the sense of the inter-relationships between higher and lower levels, and in the sense of the dialogue between the perceptions of he/she who does the experiencing, and he/she who observes and classifies. It is only our definitions which remain static, for the individual may always be capable of change.

CHAPTER 9

THE EMERGING PHILOSOPHY OF LEARNING

This thesis is about learning in three different forms:

1. The propositional model of life as learning, developed as the subject matter of inquiry.
2. Learning as a method for research.
3. Learning as personal process in the course of the research.

The major conclusions which emerged in the course of inquiry were

(a) The centrality of the concept of 'resistance' in all three forms, the propositional model and the personal process both embracing a philosophy of learning through resistance, and the methodology a philosophy of learning through deliberately confronting resistance.

(b) The impossibility of excluding the personal dimension of my own learning, however unintended, and

(c) The value of the personal dimension, by far outweighing (at least for me) the value of the propositional model and the model developed through the methodology.

The total learning process of inquiry was one in which the subject matter and propositional model of learning through life was the first to become explicit, presenting at the time of discovery no immediate conscious parallels with my own process of learning, but which involved me as a researcher in a role which placed more and more emphasis on the exploration of my own experience, and finally culminated in my understanding, now in retrospect, of the parallels of the propositional model with my own process during inquiry, and the way in which my learning developed.

It is impossible to say which comes first in the dialectic of experiencing and conceptualisation, to say that either my experiences are primary and have helped to shape the conceptual model, or that

conceptualisation is primary and has helped to shape my understanding of my own experiences - only that both have become possibilities through the act of inquiry, and that my personal understanding has only become explicit now that the circle has completed its turn.

In this chapter I shall describe the total process of learning by taking each of the three forms in turn, in order of their manifestation through inquiry, beginning with the first and most easily accessed form, the propositional model of learning through life.

1. Life as learning: the propositional model

The theoretical developments of the inquiry conclude that learning and change through life revolve around a central dynamic between the experience of personal conflict and a natural resistance to learning and change - a dynamic which has three different forms in the context of the experiences of the participants in inquiry. These are

(a) Where resistance to learning combined with a facility for circumstantial change reinforces resistance to resolving personal conflicts.

(b) Where resistance to learning and to circumstantial change leads eventually to crisis and an awareness of personal conflicts, though no resolution.

(c) Where resistance to learning and to change eventually leads to a crisis resulting in the resolution of personal conflict and considerable personal learning.

In all cases, learning reveals a dialectical form in which the resistance to learning and change is an essential aspect. Learning proceeds through the experience of resistance and is contained in it. But this does not always happen as the first two forms of the process suggest. The essential movement from resistance to effecting personal change happens only when resistance brings about total disillusion and the

individual's worst fears are actually realised in a concrete relationship; where he or she is faced with the alternatives of total personal collapse, perhaps suicide, or with a change in perceptions and actions if he or she is to survive at all, and maintain any kind of positive self-image; where there is nothing left to lose by change and everything to gain from it.

Personal change occurs when the pattern set in childhood and parental relationships offer no way forward for the individual; when there is no point in maintaining or re-establishing the pattern of the past. Paradoxically it is the initially blind pursuit of this pattern which results in the experience of disillusionment, and the capacity to then stand back and reassess it and see it as an illusion rather than actuality. The more total the individual's resistance in the first place to acknowledging other ways of perceiving and acting, the more blind to personal needs and to the needs of others, the more the potential for total disillusionment and personal learning and change, and for the acceptance of intrapersonal conflict and the development of the capacity to overthrow and resolve it with a new pattern of experiencing and action. In this, resistance may paradoxically bring about its own transformation.

As a philosophy for living, there is a temptation to suggest that only he or she who learns is 'right', and if the Freudian doctrine is accepted, that we must always learn to uncover our suppressed and repressed feelings for the sake of our psychological health; that we must in other words learn to resolve the dialectic of learning and resistance and take our lives onto a new level, into a new synthesis.

But who is right? The inquiry proposes in conclusion that learning develops through the resistance to learning. Without resistance, there would be no need to learn and no learning, and the greater the resistance, the more it extends to our understanding of others as well as of ourselves,

the greater the potential for learning. In a dialectical framework there can be no absolute 'right' or 'wrong'; one is implicit in the other, and resistance is essential to learning.

Those who appeared to learn, Don and Sara, were those who for many years resisted awareness and acceptance of their conflicting tendencies, but freedom from this only came through the repeated investment in the resistance to it.

Indeed, resistance has its own rationale as a means of survival. It is preferable sometimes, if not most of the time, to resist the choice to change. Each of the participants who chose not to change in themselves was aware of this, and accepted it, even proud of it. The need for parental acceptance, familiarity and loyalty to family values, to the standards of childhood and adolescence, the experiences of achievement and success in the social world, are more important to preserve than the weight of the need to resolve conflicts and frustrations, to confront fears, and to dig up and reinterpret the consistency of the past. The emerging philosophy reveals an underlying dialectic between learning and change, and the loyalty to experiences and values of the past.

Only when loyalty itself becomes a personal foe, throwing the individual into an incomprehendable conflict and vicious circle of distress which cannot be broken even in crisis, when the rationale remains hidden in the depths of experience, then a 'natural' learning philosophy breaks down, and there is no easy natural resolution. Then there is a place for therapy and assisted learning.

2. Learning as method for research

In contrast with learning through life, the method of discovery developed through inquiry aims quite deliberately to overcome any natural resistance to learning through the techniques of questioning and con-

frontation, personally and interpersonally, through the different levels of theoretical development - i. through the exploration and description of personal experiencing; ii. through the development of a shared interpretation, and iii. through the integration of interpretations into a general theory.

Through the sequences of questioning and interpretation, the method tends towards a refinement of meaning, as in the 'Hegelian' dialectic of progression (Churchmann, 1971: 175). The process is both simultaneously a reduction towards the most significant and most generally significant aspects of participants' experiences, and a construction or recreation of them, in their reinterpretation through mutual dialogue.

The synthesising role of the researcher in the management of this dialogue, and in the integration of individual interpretations is vital. Through the influx of ideas from different directions and points of view, there must be some 'one' to grasp the logic common to all, and the synthesising begins from the earliest stages.

In an extended methodology, where there is more than one 'researcher', or where all participants are interested in taking an active part in the theoretical and conceptual development, there would be a further stage in the process - the synthesis of each individual's syntheses.

I should like now to consider in more detail the particular role of the researcher in the learning process, and the problems that synthesis brings for developing a theory which is grounded in the experience of others.

The role of the researcher

In the development of a method to meet all three objectives (knowing in and for action; a shared understanding; a theory grounded in individual experience) the researcher has the role of conceptual caretaker and synthesiser, and a role in action rather like the devil's advocate.

The researcher is the protagonist in the dialectic between movivation and resistance to learning between ideality and actuality, the 'cheer-leader' encouraging the participants to step outside their everyday life, to explore more deeply the inconsistencies and conflicts in their experiences and to reinterpret their understanding of their experience. This essential to the achievement of all three objectives. The researcher's primary aim is to facilitate the presentation of experience as it really is, how each makes sense of his/her world. The first step at the level of description is to generate information and awareness that is freed from superficial distortions. In tandem with this, the researcher must question her own interpretation as well as encouraging participants to question theirs, in order to make both explicit and find out 'what is', what experiences are significant and how they are understood by the individual.

Then comes an interesting development, the reinterpretation of experience within the context of the research, and in the development of a shared understanding, by definition a new and different understanding. This poses the researcher a considerable problem - to what extent should she/he confront and participate in this? No participation will result in no understanding; too much participation or the wrong sort could lead to an unequal and distorted understanding, where the researcher uses confrontation to rationalise and establish the consistency of his/her idealistic preconceptions. The development of a shared understanding demands that questioning is reciprocal, and that the researcher is confronted as well as being confronting. Here the researcher must seek to differentiate between perceptions that are confirmed by the individual and those that are not, to differentiate between what is relevant in a personal perspective only, what logic underlying the understanding is acceptable to the participants, and what is not.

Finally, in theory building, the researcher can integrate perspectives into a theory, providing the differentiations are maintained. If they are not, correspondence to anything other than the researcher's own perceptions may be illusory, and the researcher may commit what Bateson calls 'a blunder' in logical typing (1980: 53) - getting one logical class mixed up with another, one level of abstraction with another, and statements with statements about statements.

In my own inquiry, in the second project, the effect was to develop and differentiate in my own theoretical perspective a 'meta-pattern', an interpretation of interpretations where my own needs for greater consistency and order, my own ideals and preconceptions forced connections where they did not exist for the participants. This was a deviation from the 'holistic' model followed up to this point, where the emphasis lay on making connections based upon the concrete observable facts (see p.62 above) and was essentially prompted by my own needs to find a rationale which might somehow 'explain' the inconsistencies, which I observed as a fact in my own experience of the participants.

In an extended methodology, the next step must be the exploration of the researcher's preconception and experiences underlying the personal interpretation. Here the personal learning of the researcher can complete its cycle. The research begins with the researcher's interests and ends in the exploration of his/her personal explanatory model. The development of explanation, and of the researcher's perspective, is most significant in the personal learning of the researcher, but not necessarily significant in terms of understanding the experiences of others, unless they themselves take up and explore the relevance of the explanation to their experiences.

Thus the full circle of research and the learning of the methodology is developed in and through the interests, experience and learning of

the researcher, in and through the dialogue of self and other, and takes the researcher through a learning cycle which eventually reveals the strength of his/her own personal ideals and needs for consistency.

3. Learning as personal process: my own learning

Finally I would like to turn to my own personal learning as certainly for me the most significant aspect of the entire enquiry. When I began I had not appreciated the extent to which I would find myself and my own life drawn into the processes of research. Quite unintentionally at first, and with gathering momentum I found that the methodology that I had adopted demanded more and more of my own reflections and feelings about my own life.

Initially I was aware that the choice of research subject would have a grounding in my own experience, and that my approach to the design of inquiry would be influenced by my own learning style, preferred capacities for taking in information and reaching judgements about it (Mitroff and Kilmann, 1978) - and that I would need to monitor my thoughts and feelings throughout inquiry in the interests of validity. But I wasn't especially interested in exploring 'me'. I was on the contrary interested in understanding others, and their view of the world.

Now, in retrospect, five years on and in the wake of inquiry, I am aware of a hidden agenda coming to light, and painfully so at times. Now I see that my own agenda was idealistic, and one with the object of avoidance; with hope that in throwing myself into inquiry I would be able to avoid a great deal of what was going on in my life outside the research. I found of course that this could not be so! Not only did I find the processes of inquiry revealing to me some of my values and characteristics, limitations and abilities. Conducting the inquiry taught me also some unwelcome truths or realities that I did not particularly want to face up to.

Learning began initially at a conceptual level, through discovering my conceptual interests and deciding how I wanted to go about the practical inquiry, answering the questions of epistemological and methodological design, establishing my interests in an existential-hermeneutic phenomenological approach. I became aware then of my values that prompted my adoption of such an approach, of my belief in self-determination, in communication, flexibility, living through participation in our social world. I became aware of my belief that 'reality', 'truth' and knowledge about ourselves are essentially paradoxical, and that we are ambiguous, contradictory beings.

At the same time I was interested in how we manage to develop our individuality and sense of personal identity. Having made some fairly sweeping changes in my own life, in the previous year, both in my work and in my personal life, I was aware of the relevance of 'change' to my own life, but I did not relate my personal experiences to my research interests in any more than a loose way. There was certainly no clear 'whole' that I could understand, in which my interests in change, in personal identity and in work could be clearly integrated and interrelated.

Then, through each of the two practical projects, through intentionally seeking to compare and differentiate my views and interpretations from those of the participants, and through the interpersonal and experiential processes of the method, the whole began gradually to emerge.

The main ways in which this happened were through

(1) The experiences of choice and responsibility for the general direction of inquiry.

(2) Through deliberately monitoring and exploring my feelings about the participants and their experiences.

(3) Through the influence of actually doing the research on my personal

life, and vice versa.

(4) Through relating the conclusions from each inquiry to my own life.

3.1 Learning through the experiences of choice and responsibility for the direction of inquiry: the experience of conflict and crisis

This form of learning was the first to become apparent, developing from the first experiences of interaction with the first group of participants.

It developed in the basic dialectic of the method, in the implementation of the philosophy of learning through confrontation of resistances, through the systematic effort to question the taken for granted, through the movement towards deeper levels of personal experience and meaning.

While accepting this philosophy of method I found, as previously stated, that I had considerable choice, freedom and 'power' to direct and encourage this process as forcefully and as aggressively as I wanted. My choice to allow participants their own freedom to choose their approach was founded in and influenced by my own personal experiences during the methodology.

For I found that I did not want to 'make' anyone do anything they did not want to. I wanted everyone to enjoy themselves. I did not want to dredge up unhappy experiences when this seemed unnecessary. I felt a tremendous responsibility for everyone, with a few exceptions, increased by the participants' own 'niceness', their willingness to please, to help me. I felt a sense of obligation to everyone. I wanted them to feel good about it all, to feel their identities enhanced and self-respect and dignity maintained.

As a result, I found myself falling into an ever increasing conflict between what seemed to be essential to the validity of the methodology, the demand to confront, to push, to prompt, and tremendous feelings

of guilt, for which I could find a complementary argument from validity.

I felt guilty that I was intruding in people's personal lives, that I was using the excuse of doing a 'PhD' to develop very special kinds of relationships with people who owed nothing to me. I felt that I was 'using' people simply for my own ends, regardless of the fact that they had all chosen to come and had come on their own terms, accepting responsibility for themselves and were indeed sometimes overwhelming in their maturity. I could easily justify taking a less confronting approach, for surely the more I confronted, the more I was likely to force me own ideas and perceptions upon everyone.

From this conflict I fell into a conflict between self-doubt, a lack of confidence in my abilities, thinking I was not asking enough of everyone, and a reassertion of my values, that research must above all be humane, preserving human dignity, and that I had no right to interfere with people's choices and ways of living. At one point, after the first practical project, the conflict seemed irresolvable and I decided that I could not know whether I was forcing my own anxieties upon the research, or whether I was acting correctly. I felt that I was not up to doing research, and reached a crisis.

Then, after a period of doubt and difficulty, the cloud miraculously lifted. I was spurred on by a renewal of energy, and awareness that I wanted to try and overcome the conflict, and to improve upon the methodology. I was able to accept that I had done the best that I could, and to make positive plans for action, to convert my new-found awareness into new plans. I was helped considerably in this, not insignificantly by encouragement and support in my personal life.

In the second project I was able to recognise the conflict, to tackle it by encouraging confrontation as a group principle, and found that aiming to develop closer, more trusting relationships over a longer

period of time helped to alleviate much of the associated stress.

From this I learned that I myself had a deep-seated need to keep going cheerfully, and was fearful of falling into the depths of distress myself. I realised that there was a great deal in my own life that I was unhappy about, and that I had developed a philosophy of keeping going at all costs, not letting the distressing experiences catch up. Exactly what I was unhappy about however did not really surface until late in the day.

The form of this dimension of learning I realise, as I write now, has parallels with the form of learning as life process. As in the life process, it began with conflict and proceeded through the culmination of conflict in crisis, to be followed by resolution with the renewal of self-affirmation on a positive note, and the development of new meanings, new choices for action.

3.2 Learning through the exploration of feelings towards participants: the experience of opposites

Monitoring my feelings and developing my own theoretical interpretation resulted in an awareness of a considerable change in my attitudes through the duration of the research projects.

In the first project of the inquiry, I was amazed and a little bewildered by the 'ordinariness' of everyone's aspirations and ideals. I was surprised to learn of the extent to which what seemed to me very basic and boring things were the supremely valued aspects of people's lives. 'A nice home', 'a nice family', a small achievement or minor recognition at work gave great happiness. I was beginning to find out that not everyone valued change.

I realised that I was in some way seeking a life that was not so mundane, as these lives seemed. I did not know what - perhaps I was hoping, in vain, that the participants might give me a clue. I was

disturbed too by the anger and sadness that appeared in people's lives and experiences, the emotion that nevertheless emanated from the ordinariness. Was this really what life was all about? Wasn't there anything more, anything new, anything different or exciting? I asked myself.

In the first project, the majority of participants conformed to the conventional social norms of marriage and family, but in the second project the participants all, as it turned out, were unmarried or divorced, leading single rather than family lives. In this project I found my feelings were of quite a different nature. Able to identify more easily with the participants I felt drawn into their lives very much more, and felt a great empathy with them. I was saddened by their sadnesses, awed by their capacities to keep going through disappointment and crisis, yet still preserving hope and faith that their deepest values would be realised. Realising that I was in a similar life-situation, I learned a great deal from them.

They too were by and large seeking the same stability and happiness that was so valued by the first group. Even when work was considered very important, as Lorna, Sean and Alec, and the need for a secure and stable personal life and partnership were not so obvious or apparent, still no lasting alternative had yet been found. I realised that in my own interpretation I was tending to attribute to the latter an unvoiced need for security in their relationships and personal life, which made me realise how much I wanted everyone to need and to express their need for a 'nice home' and 'nice family' - quite the reverse from the first project.

I had learned from Mary, Claire, Sara and Don that I too was seeking the same, and learned that there was nothing to be ashamed of in admitting this. I found a sense of strength in their honesty. I realised that

they were able to own up to something that I felt a great empathy with, but up to this point had tried to ignore and suppress, because it was so painful and difficult to live with in the apparent hopelessness of ever finding fulfilment. In my admiration of these participants I learned a great deal, and began to reinterpret my feelings during the first project as being the way that I had found of coping at the time. In accepting these feelings I experienced a great sense of freedom.

The change from one pole to another was in part influenced by the identifications and empathy that I could not help feeling towards the second group. I was also influenced by changes in my feelings in my life as a whole, realised in the reciprocal influence of the research upon my personal life and vice versa.

3.3 Learning through the practical and mutual influencing of research and personal life: learning the hard way

The third major form of personal learning lay in the ways in which actually attempting the thesis brought awareness and understanding.

When I began, almost five years ago, I made a conscious decision to plan my life according to what I wanted in a career. In the breakup of my marriage I felt that I wanted to develop a career to the full, unrestricted by the tie of marriage. For I had found that I was so tied down when married, from ever finding or taking up a job that really was what I wanted. I felt bound to stay in second place, my husband's career taking priority for obvious practical reasons, since it was likely that he would earn more than I ever would.

Commencing my career in research as a full-time student, I felt confident and happy that this was the opportunity that I had been seeking, that life was about to begin again.

And indeed it did, but as it developed, in a way that I had not anticipated.

While totally absorbing, I found that entering into inquiry was demanding and exhausting in a way that I had never experienced my 'work' before. It was certainly the hardest thing that I had ever tried to do in my life, and brought with it as described above conflicts of the kind I had never envisaged or experienced before. For the first time in my life I felt afraid of failing at something that was very important to me. I felt under a great personal presssure, of entirely my own doing, to prove that I could do it, that I could have a successful and fulfilling career.

But I found that this was an increasingly difficult ideal to achieve. As time went by, I found that I needed more and more some kind of support in my personal life. I did not find it easy to be the independent woman, the 'liberated' feminist that people seemed to expect. I found that there was an enormous and important gap in my life that the research on its own could not fulfil, although a vital part. I found to my cost that if I was not happy in my personal life, in a relationship that had some kind of future, I could certainly not throw myself into my work any longer to forget it. I learned, through trying the opposite, that I really did want and need a 'nice home' and a 'nice family', that is, children of my own.

By the same token, when things were going well on the personal scene, I found my work so much easier. I had more energy, more confidence, and enjoyed it more.

But at the same time, I still continued, and continue, to find a great deal of satisfaction in my work. It still is the most important tangible aspect of my life. I still feel that I would love to be able to throw myself into it completely, for life would be so much simpler then!

I have learned through trial and error that immersing myself in

my work is not enough, that there has to be something, or more specifically 'someone' else, that there must be stability and security in relationship as well. I have learned that without this, in spite of conscious aims and determined efforts to not let this need rule my life or plunge me into a blind panic when there is 'no-one', I can see little point in whatever else that I am doing. Yet I still see it as a weakness, something that will hinder, something that has to be fought in order to survive, for it is so intangible and fragile.

I fear becoming too dependent, and when able to concentrate upon other things, throw myself wholeheartedly into them. I have found that I will pursue my work and writing to the oblivion of everything else if I can, so jeopardising the very thing that helps to give me energy, risking the future of any relationship.

I have come to understand that I need both a secure and loving relationship and fulfilment and expression through my work, that neither of these needs can be suppressed; and that I find it difficult to achieve a balance between the two.

The form of this learning has been finding out the hard way - following a course of action only to find that it was not the right course, through the surfacing of suppressed feelings, following another course of action only to find that this is not right for me either, and so on.

I have discovered through all of these changes and swings in feelings that I have a deep seated loss of faith in the possibility of the fulfilment of my needs for relationship. I can speculate that this is something to do with the failure of my marriage, something that I had never anticipated would happen, and yet it did. And so I find myself caught in a conflict of desperate need without hope of fulfilment. I realise that this conflict is likely to be a part of my life for years to come,

and that I must still seek ways of finding a resolution.

Thus, through the combined forms of all three dimensions of learning, I have learned to face up to the complexities and conflicts in my life, even if I cannot resolve them.

3.4 Learning through the relation of conclusions to my own life

At the end of the first project I wrote my own profile, again as an exploration on behalf of validity, to try to ascertain how much I might have influenced the course of the theoretical development, to explore the connections between my own life and the emerging theory. I found that all four of the 'identity' states had meaning for me, at different times in my life. I could find in myself sub-personalities corresponding to the happiness of the Cycle A, the compromise of Cycle B, the determination of Cycle C, and the depression of Cycle D.

I found this quite unexpectedly, and in the second project decided to explore more systematically how I might influence the theory building, through the careful differentiation of interpretations.

In reviewing the ideas which lay at the heart of my own interpretation I find a source of considerable learning. I had sought an explanation which located individual interpretations in the context of the influence of unresolved conflicts inherited from childhood, and had proposed that each repeated pattern developed in relationships with parents in their relationships in later life, often experiencing difficulties in coming to terms with partners who did not respond as parents did. I had identified a deep core of resistence to uncovering the past, a source of insecurity in the present, which was overcome only in the experience of crisis,

This was an interpretation which made sense to me if I applied it to my own experience. I too, like Sara and Don, had experienced the crisis of a marriage break-up and divorce, and had learned through

this, or at least had had to learn, a new attitude to relationships, a change in my expectations of others and in my view of the world. Traumatic though it was, the experience was one of growing up, of realising the necessity to find a new base of security in life as the glaring insecurity of past values and ways of being were revealed.

But how was this related to parental relationships? I could see how a combination of values and characteristics developed in my childhood and teens had hastened the break-up of my marriage. I had found my own beliefs that life was something to be enjoyed, rather than something to be grateful for, that it was worth having a go at something that one really wanted, that it was worth risking financial security to do something fulfilling, that even though a mere female I could have an interesting and rewarding career, conflicted with my husband's beliefs and values. These were all beliefs and values that I inherited, I am sure, from my mother.

I could also see how, just as in my teens, I had kept a lot of my feelings to myself and had never really thought that my parents could understand them; I had also kept them to myself in my marriage. Rather than talk openly at the critical times, I had planned unilaterally how to resolve the conflicts, and sought resolution through going the other way, acting independently. Since the break-up I have learned, or am learning, not to keep my feelings so much to myself, to argue it out in the relationship.

I cannot quite see, as the theory indeed suggests, what the partially resolved childhood conflict and core of insecurity preventing full learning is founded in. But I have become aware through the recent years of the conflict previously described, between my needs for relationship and for a career. The conflict is deepened and complicated by feelings and values associated with childhood and family, which prompt me to

seek relationships of stability and security, although it is difficult to achieve this in practice, and results in the experience of continuing conflict and uncertainty for me, which is cemented by my resistance to accepting a way of life which gives less value to stability and loyalty in relationships.

3.5 The culmination of personal learning: the hidden agenda

Taking into account all four aspects and forms of my own learning through inquiry, I can now begin to trace my hidden agenda, my underlying needs and purposes in setting out in inquiry.

I believe now, although I could never have seen this or admitted it at the time, that I began the research desperately seeking to restore a sense of my own identity, after the breakdown of my marriage. I believed then that the way forward was through developing my career, having experienced the precariousness of an identity based upon relationship and marriage. All the ideas I adopted as a conceptual base of inquiry, the ideas of identity, of development and change, of fulfilment through work, were ideas I was putting into practice in my own life at the time. I was interested in exploring this new 'world view'. Perhaps I needed to do so, to help me in my own new situation, getting over my crumbled marriage.

At first I did not want to remember the past or think about it at all. I wanted to shut it out, to move forwards rather than backwards. I wanted to experience a new life that would absorb my energies and interests, and prove to myself that I certainly could do well in my career, that I could survive on my own, and that my marriage was after all not very important. This was my agenda when setting out the research, now emerging in retrospect.

The inquiry taught me that this was a view that was mistaken, or at least too simple. I have learned that the past cannot be shut out,

that marriage was and is important to me as well as a career, and that the way forward is through accepting and expressing feelings of conflict. I have realised that there is no simple answer, and that there are many conflicts still to be unresolved or worked through, for example what I want from a relationship, or what I will settle for or not.

The way that this had come to light has been through a dialectic of opposites - of pursuing one extreme, one set of beliefs, to find that this was not the whole, that there were other conflicting ideas, needs and interests that needed to be recognised and brought into play.

The acceptance of the counter thesis, the antithesis, has involved a descent into personal experience, an overcoming of resistances to awareness and to learning. The pattern of my own learning, bringing to light my hidden agenda, and developing a new interpretation of past experiences, a new philosophy of action, follows the form of the philosophy of learning as life process, and reflects the essential form of learning emerging through the inquiry as a whole, through (i) pursuance of some initial concepts, beliefs and propositions, through (ii) trying them out in practice, to finding (iii) new experiential knowledge, new feelings and experiences, which in turn informs and explicates the propositions and beliefs that I began with, and develops new knowledge for action. The new synthesis is both informative and transformative, emerging through both a movement of explication, making explicit experiences and an agenda which were there before, and a movement of change, the reinterpretation of this in a new propositional and practical schema.

An interesting although pointless question that springs to mind is what might have happened had I not undertaken the inquiry? Would I have learned all this or any part of it? It is impossible of course to answer this, but conducting a research inquiry, 'doing a PhD', is one way of coming to understand what 'personal development' means in

personal experience, one way of fostering learning and change, of finding where lies the boundary between ideality and actuality.

CHAPTER 10

METHODOLOGY: A REVIEW AND SOME FINAL CONCLUSIONS

In this last chapter I shall review the development of the methodology through the two empirical projects of the inquiry, identifying the key problems experienced in the practical implementation of an experiential, co-operative method, and subsequently discuss the implications of my own experiences for the scientific model with which I began, for the redefinition of what constitutes empirical validity, and for the wider development of phenomenological research.

1. Summary of methodological developments and problems of the method in practice

Through the inquiry as a whole I found myself moving towards a method which was closer in some ways to the models developed by the new paradigm practitioners (see pp.46-60 above). In the second project we developed a more elaborate system of feedback than in the first, and a closer integration of experiencing and reflection. The trend was towards a more intimate and smaller group of participants, with a closer involvement and a greater degree of 'self-study' on my own part, towards a method where inquiry was more closely integrated with the personal learning and development of the research participants in their contemporary life situations.

The chief difference from the new paradigm models lay in the developing emphasis on empirical validity as a function of the differentiation of my perspective from those of the participants, rather than trying to ensure equal roles and equal participation on the part of all. There were two particular problems which underlay and contributed to this latter development.

One was the difficulty that I continued to experience in shedding the hat of the expert and in participating equally, especially in view of the integrative and synthesising role demanded by theoretical development, and the participants' general and understandable reluctance to contribute more to the writing of the theory.

The other was the resistance of the participants to activities that I wanted to pursue, particularly those that I saw as conducive to the development of empirical validity. This resistance was manifested for example in the participants' reluctance in the second project to spend much time 'practising' skills of awareness; in a tendency to gather in the full group to conceptualise 'about' learning rather than to focus on their own experiences; in the resistance in one or two members of the group, notably Alec and Sean, to exploring the feelings underlying some of their observations, to pursuing and working through what seemed to me to be obvious incongruencies and contradictions in their total presentation; and in the resistance to identifying more precise personal learning objectives.

As a result of the combination of both of these aspects, our inequality in roles and the participants' resistances, I experienced two particular dilemmas which were never ever really resolved.

The first was the dilemma between pursuing the resistance of the group as it manifested itself in the 'here and now', and between pursuing my own aims and associated tasks of inquiry, when for example the more vociferous members of the group threatened to monopolise the course of events with their own choices. Should I let the group work itself out? Should I intervene, and on what terms? Should a challenge aim to restore my own choice of direction? Or should it focus on the events happening within the group? This kind of dilemma is inevitable perhaps in any kind of structured or semi-structured inquiry, with an ultimate

purpose beyond the experience of the present, and the researcher must always find a way of integrating the two. But it may not have been so acute had I elected to work with a group with a more consistent appreciation of the psychological and scientific models underlying the inquiry, with equal commitment to confronting each other.

The second dilemma was that between my own feelings of wanting to confront and direct the course of activities, to adopt a more forceful strategy with individual participants, my own feelings rejecting the authenticity of participants' statements, and between (a) the feeling that this might unnecessarily distort their own view, and (b) my acceptance of their own autonomy and right to self-direction, and (c) the fact that their view was equally, if not more, as valid as my own, as a perspective of 'what is' for them.

Although adopting a strategy of differentiating between our mutual perspectives, confronting but making it clear that this was based on my own interpretation, attempting to resolve the dilemma through communication and negotiation, this conflict was never put to rest in so far as I did not experience a reciprocal confrontation, although requested. I still felt in danger of imposing my view, of interacting one-sidedly - again a problem which might have been resolved by a more equal participation.

2. Implications for the scientific model

These findings have a number of implications for the modification of the scientific model adopted and the definition of the ideal conditions and potential threats to the validity of empirical inquiry, exposing perhaps a number of 'myths' about co-operative and experiential methods of research, when taken into the non-professional 'lay' context of the majority, that is those unfamiliar with the philosophies and methods of the inquiry.

2.1 The myths

The first myth is the myth of role equality. When inquiry is initiated by a researcher working for a personal doctorate, who invites participants to suspend belief in their normal everyday ways of perceiving and understanding, to enter into activities which promise to bring a 'truer' reality, the differentiation between lay person and 'expert' or 'psychologist' is difficult to lose. The real issue for inquiry is not how we can pretend to be equal, but how we can recognise and accept our differences and develop a method that fosters complementarity in our roles, that is non-alienating for each of us as individuals, that is flexible in the relationships that it can facilitate.

The second myth is the myth of experiential learning, of 'action science' as a phenomenon which is containable within a relatively short space of time. One of the underlying aims and assumptions of Torbert's model (see pp.54-58 above) is that we can learn what our 'true' purposes are and find the meaning in our experiences and develop new actions accordingly within the spatio-temporal context of the inquiry itself, that we can complete an experiential learning cycle and make the changes of attitudes and behaviours required to act congruently with our purposes within the inquiry, even if this is to pre-suppose that the apparently impossible is attainable. Learning 'in and for action' implies that we reflect upon past and present through our actions in the present and at the same time find a new direction for the future.

But we found in inquiry that this was not so, and that the deeper the eventual learning, the greater the resistance to it, the greater the conflict and the less the likelihood of finding a speedy resolution in the inquiry itself, unless it comes at the pinnacle of personal crisis. I found in my own experience and in the experiences of the participants, some of whom I kept in touch with after the projects, that the kind

of reflection which brings with it a new level of understanding and clarity which is useful for future action comes at a distance from the experiencing and action of the present, with physical detachment from it, even if some other form of personal development training is undertaken at the time of the inquiry. Indeed, the more distressing the encounter with experience in action, the more emotionally demanding it is, the more difficult it is to recognise and accept the contradictions and to simply pass into the stage of reflection and 'propositional knowing', as Heron's model (see pp.49-50 above), implies with disarming ease.

This is particularly difficult for the researcher who enters into the experiencing, and I found to my cost that immersion in encounter with one's own experience is prohibitive to any hasty 'making sense'. If the translation into a new level of understanding is attempted too quickly, on the part of others or for oneself, while still in the 'experiencing' stage, the result is a terrifying deadlock. The problem for inquiry is how to manage the natural timing of the learning process, which cannot be predicted beforehand, with the planned timescale of the project; how to give enough time to the re-exploration of learning some time after the formal 'event'; and how to manage the unplanned.

A third myth which emerged is that there are any safe and sound psychological models for the researcher to hide behind if the method is intended to be co-operative and determined as far as possible by all who take part in the inquiry. When the researcher is faced with resistance to his/her own ideas and ideals about what is necessary for validity, the risk is that he/she will be unable to accept the fact of this resistance and will plough on regardless, so that the method is neither co-operative nor creative. This was a particular difficulty in my chosen context of inquiry with participants who did not have any prior access to or knowledge of the ideas that I had brought with me.

The problem is how to ensure that our conceptual models stimulate rather than suffocate originality, and are open to modification in practice while providing some kind of positive and 'scientific' guidance. The very real difficulties the researcher faces are in judging where to draw the line between his/her view, and the views of others, in judging when to give priority to one or to the other, and in finding a way of accommodating each other's models creatively.

2.2 Implications for validity in experiential research

On the questions of what constitutes validity, and how we know when inquiry is empirically valid, these findings pose some interesting but not irresolvable problems.

If we did all share the same view of reality, the same learning styles, the same psychological model, the same ideas about what promotes and what inhibits and distorts perceptions and learning, then the theoretical determination of the qualities of 'correspondence' and the ideal conditions for the development of it would be a relatively simple matter.

If we did all have the capacity to participate equally, to confront as we are confronted, to reflect as we act, to experience and to learn significantly from the experience simultaneously, to 'learn easily', then testing the validity of inquiry in terms of the actual and apparent learning by participants would be likewise a fairly straightforward matter.

And even if as inquiry has demonstrated it is difficult to fulfil these conditions in a particular context, with particular participants, it might also be argued that (a) the inquiry is invalid because these conditions are not fulfilled, and perhaps (b) that this shows that experiential and co-operative research cannot be successfully carried out with lay participants.

But to take this view is to ignore the emerging actuality of the

inquiry, which quite clearly demonstrates that we do not learn easily and without a great deal of resistance; that our assumptions about the world and about our learning vary from individual to individual; and the difficulty that we experience in achieving the dialectical unity of the learning cycle, in reflecting and acting and experiencing, is part of the essence of our existence. It is to ignore the reality of the fact that we need to learn, to inquire, to understand because we do not easily understand ourselves and each other.

It is thus a red herring to presuppose that validity must lie in the fulfilment of particular sets of conditions associated with the translation of the phenomenological model into a conceptual psychological model, and must depend upon this. The inquiry shows that this leads to irresolvable conflicts between for example the conditions of co-operation, personal freedom and choice, and self-development according to a particular psychological model, which may in turn inhibit the constructive and creative attempt to find a new form of validity which is grounded in the actuality of the inquiry.

Validity lies rather in acknowledging the actuality of intersubjective disagreement and of resistance to learning, and in finding a form of dialectical unity and 'correspondence' in personal experience that also permits each individual's definition of what constitutes learning and reality to be seen in the context of others, while a common and essential thread of meaning between perspectives is also provided.

The difficulties that this poses for the researcher are

(a) Finding and defining the common thread(s) which may be taken as the basis for the rules of the particular methodology, and

(b) Finding a way of determining and testing validity in practice.

For these issues depend in turn almost entirely upon what each participant not only wants and perceives as meaningful, but also what each sets as the order of his/her priorities, and what each

sets as the standard of his/her achievement and participation. There is a potential for many kinds of qualitative and quantitative differences.

This is one of the basic problems for existential-phenomenological inquiry. Not only may individuals have different but equally valid perceptions of what constitutes meaning and meaningful participation, learning and self-determination; but only he or she can say how meaningful the inquiry has proved to be, how much correspondence has been achieved between experiencing, expression and understanding.

So where is the common thread for the methodology? What criteria and conditions may nevertheless be identified as fundamental to validity in experiential and co-operative research, in existential-phenomenological inquiry? How can intersubjective agreement be fostered in a way which also enables individual perceptions to be known and shown as they are?

On the basis of my own experiences in conducting inquiry, on the basis of these particular projects, I would suggest that the fundamental condition is that of being honest to one's own intuition, following the stirrings of one's consciousness, not letting uncertainties and difficulties go unexplored. This is essential to any form of learning and of understanding, intrapersonally and interpersonally. It does not necessarily demand equal participation, the discovery of personal defences and insecurities, completed learning, although it does demand that we aim to achieve these things, or aim to achieve whatever we associate with the development of a clearer understanding of our experiences, and their changes through the course of inquiry, as ideals are modified by practice. And in a co-operative inquiry it does demand conditions which foster freedom of individual choice, a non-alienating climate conducive to committed participation, and interpersonal trust.

The 'correspondence' of the findings to the experiences they represent is not something that can be measured and proved to the detached observer,

and the inquiry suggests that total correspondence is an unattainable ideal. Any intersubjective interpretation or personal interpretation of another's experiences is bound to be influenced by the interests, experiences, perceptions and even literary skills of he/she who co-ordinates and writes the interpretation; each moment of inquiry brings a new interaction which outstrips the recording of that moment; and the vagaries of the quality of the commitment and honesty of each participant all help to limit and qualify the achievement of correspondence.

But these limitations should not inhibit the researcher from attempting to achieve the greatest possible correspondence and learning on the part of the participants. And although there are no 'tests' of this, the inquiry may be judged both by participants and by readers by the extent to which, and the manner in which, the problems which give research its rationale are described, encountered and recognised, if not resolved; and by the extent to which personal preconceptions are integrated with participants' preconceptions about what constitutes meaningful inquiry; and by the extent to which purposes are followed through to verify preconceptions or to bring new conclusions.

Inquiry is in the end, a testing of the beliefs of the researcher in practice, a test of the strength and flexibility of personal philosophies and values. If there has been no testing, there has been no inquiry. My own learning was to find that differentiation must come before agreement; to find that there certainly are no answers except those which we provide ourselves, and that the process of this is never an easy path, demanding a constant review of priorities.

3. Where now research - the conflicts between life and science, self and other

Finally, these issues raise some interesting questions about the

nature and direction of experiential, phenomenological research, highlighting two important conflicts.

One is the conflict between the ideal and the actual, between the rules and standards laid by tradition and the value of present experience, especially personal experience, between the abstractions and ideals of perfection of science and the concrete realities of life. The inquiry has shown that the search to understand our experiencing is not a matter of sticking to the rules, but is a process of finding where the rules do not fit, and finding a resolution between the two.

The difficulty and the paradox of this is that research aims both to mirror the concrete reality that it finds, so that it corresponds to it, and also to change it, so that life becomes more like the ideals of science. On the one hand naive experiencing takes precedence, so that life is never reduced to ideals, and the method, if located in life, will never be tied by its rationale. On the other hand science takes precedence and demands that we regulate and evaluate our experiencing, offering rules and traditions to modify and bring a permanency of meaning to the existential present. Each researcher is faced with the problem of integrating past and present, of finding a new form of evaluation which reflects the new as well as the old, which does justice to life as well as to the ideologies of science.

I found in my own inquiry that the criteria for social, practical, empirical and conceptual validity with which I began (see pp.71, 72, 77 above) were to survive more or less intact throughout, but more as ideals than as absolute targets - that correspondence should be maximised; that inquiry should attempt to foster practical choices for action; that it should attempt to account for the greatest possible number of participants in the most extensive way, exploring individual idiosyncracies as thoroughly as possible, and providing a clear and comprehend-

able account; and that it should aim to take research to as wide an audience as possible.

But choices of the conditions and methods to achieve these and expectations of success were subject to modification in practice, and to the appearance of a new kind of rationale, the personal intuitive judgements which occur spontaneously to give direction in times of uncertainty and difficulty and to help find the synthesis between what is ideal and what is actually possible and appropriate.

But here lies the second problem - the conflicts between the personal perceptions, values and intuitions which help these decisions, and the perceptions and values of others. For what happens to the researcher when confronted with a reality that is not only far from his/her scientific ideals, but far from personal values and conflicts with intuitions?

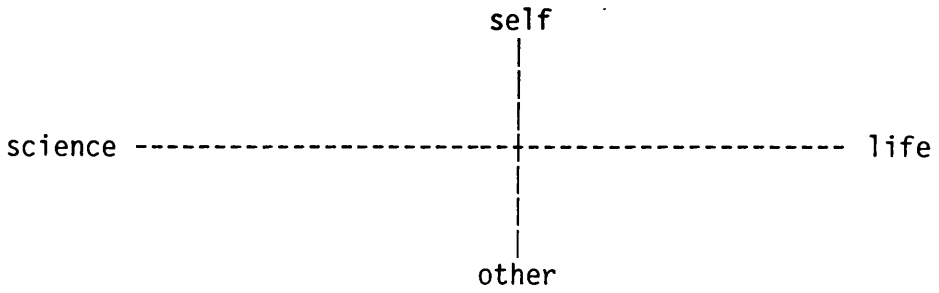


Figure 41

What happens when the participants disagree, directly or indirectly with the perceptions and standards of self and science, when life and other present an incomprehendable face? This is the crunch of the methodology, the crunch of the researcher's ability to engage in the hermeneutic dialectic of past and present, and to enter into the world of another's understanding.

There is a choice - to fight or take flight. The researcher has the choice to fight, to risk self and science, to encounter the unknown, to trust in the judgement of others and the benevolence of experiencing;

or to run away, to hold onto the safe and the familiar, to retreat to the haven of ready set rules of science and self, to ignore the interruptions in the knowledge or illusion that this will fulfil some acceptable ideals somewhere.

In experiencing this conflict I found the closest ally of a rule-bound, and static science - the ally of fear. In the fear of chaos, and that I would not be able to cope, that others would seek to sabotage, that the present was somehow unmanageable, and in the experience of an overwhelming and often abstract anxiety, I learned that the barrier at the heart of any progress and any understanding of the experiences of another lies in the researcher him/herself.

Flight is inevitably easier than fight. Getting beyond the rules, getting beyond one's own insecurities, finding the integration of life and science, self and other, demands in the end the absolute refusal and the ability not to give way to panic, the ability to confront and endure whatever we each might fear in our lives with one another - or at least the attempt to do so.

When we find the way to overcome our fears, then nothing is impossible and no philosophy is invulnerable. Then research really can enter into the life of the other, and intersubjective interpretation becomes a possibility. But the wider and the more diverse the interests and values of those who participate, the more the researcher must be prepared to let go of preconceptions, and the security of the past.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

ALAN'S PROFILE

(An example from the first project, "Integrating Individual and Work")

Alan, aged fifty four, is a senior lecturer at a college where he has worked for the last nine years, following an initial training as an engineer and a career in industry and commerce. He is married and has two sons.

Alan says that he leads a 'very full life' in which he combines his work as a lecturer with research and writing, with running his own company of business consultants, with running evening classes in 'setting up in business' at a local prison, with committee membership of several business and commercial organisations, with lay co-chairmanship of a cathedral deanery and participation in the social and industrial work of the church. His home is always open to anyone he can help on a personal or professional basis - students, colleagues, and anyone seeking advice in setting up in business.

"I like helping people and to feel involved" says Alan, regarding his consultancy work as "counselling on a wider scale - helping people to manage their own lives". In his activities outside his work he finds pleasure and satisfaction in feeling able to do this, running his company on an unpaid non-profit making basis. In his job at the college, Alan finds some satisfaction in teaching 'post-experienced' mature students, who can see the relevance of his teaching; but he feels that there is less satisfaction in working with undergraduates, because they cannot always see the value in learning about something they have not experienced. "There's a lot of work to be done in developing it to feel one is actually helping them" he says.

Much of Alan's satisfaction in his job is derived from his own

private research and writing activities, which include papers written for national conferences, and work commissioned to investigate the relation between curriculum design and the needs of particular branches of industry and commerce. Alan plans in the future to integrate his research with the completion of an M.Phil. degree.

Alan has no wish to return to work in industry, valuing the freedom he has at present to develop his own interest in his job. He accepts that he is unlikely to gain further promotion and expects to stay in his present post. "I accept my place at the college" he says. But he also finds that "helping people has many conflicts, many problems". He cannot identify completely with the role to which he commits himself, "I would like to feel that there is a vehicle by which one is fully integrated with the college" he says. Alan says that he has identified a need in himself to be "a specialist of education in the general management of small businesses". He is proud that he is recognised as such, in his activities outside work, "locally, nationally and internationally". His main frustration and source of personal conflict is the feeling that he is not recognised in his capacity "as a college person".

Alan wishes that his own personal interest in the management of small businesses were incorporated into the course curriculum as an established subject; he seeks to change both his own role and the work of the college by establishing a special course in it.

Although he has gained recognition of his skills in his consultancy activities outside work, Alan feels that he has been recognised less for his skills than for his weaknesses in his job. "At last the college are beginning to recognise my strengths rather than my weaknesses" he says. He is determined to find confirmation of his strengths - "I'll never stop striving for recognition ... I make sure I do everything I want to do."

Two conflicting but complementary elements strengthen Alan's determination: one, the pride and confidence that he has the ability to be a specialist in the small business field; and two, the negation of his abilities by others, and the recognition of his weaknesses. His experiences in both the present and the past contribute to them.

Past Influences

Nine years ago, Alan was made redundant by his previous employer - an experience which turned his hair white, he says. Up to this point, Alan had followed a career in engineering production and management. He had undertaken consultancy work advising companies establishing businesses in India, Japan and Italy; and had worked in various managerial functions, for instance, systems analysis and cost negotiation and control, to finally be appointed as Deputy Price Controller of a large project. After six months, Alan was made redundant. "I was the odd one out" he says. From then on his lifestyle took on a dramatic change.

Alan speaks of a 'hiatus' in his life, which began in his previous job, when he was "hit over the head" he says, "for badly negotiating". After his redundancy he found employment as a full-time lecturer at the college where he had been working on a part-time basis anyway, and found many stresses and strains in re-adjusting. It was particularly difficult, he says, having to organise his time to cope with both the preparation work and set teaching hours, on top of the shock of finding the base of his financial security in life temporarily removed.

Although Alan survived the hiatus to eventually become a senior lecturer, many of the interests and expectations he developed while working in industry remain with him, to become part of the identity and ideal role to which he aspires. Alan does not want to forget, but wants to be able to use his past experiences, even the experience of redundancy. In his consultancy work outside his job, he enjoys helping

others who have been made redundant and are hoping to set up in business - "Show them how it's really done ... I say to them 'I know, I've had it'" says Alan.

He still looks at the world outside his organisation as the 'real' world. Alan speaks of his wish to take a sabbatical year to go to the third world to help set up small businesses - "I need to get tuned back into reality" he says. He also feels frustrated that his own education and training - his qualifications - are not being used to the full in his present capacity. "The college don't know how to use people from commerce and industry" he says, "I have a necessity for people to see the links between education and the local chamber of commerce and industry - because of my connections ... but the college, because of their politics, do not see it that way." Alan feels that he ought to be employed in a different department, "the area for which I am more qualified, on a practical basis" he says; he feels unable to use his contacts in commerce and industry as much as he would like to in his present role.

After working at the college for two years, a further event occurred which had a lasting influence on Alan's perceptions of himself, and his employers. He was appointed in a specialist role in a centre which was later closed down, and Alan speaks of a feeling of "being pushed out for the second time".

"It was a black time" he says, "I could see the need for it". He was determined to fulfil this role, and subsequently set up his own company of consultants, with success. But fulfilment and satisfaction in accomplishing this continues to be accompanied by the frustration that his success is not recognised by his employers. Alan identifies several elements which contribute to his frustration.

Present frustration

Alan recognises the stimulus given to his frustration in his relationship with a colleague who has been given the role that he says "he would like to play". "Is it individual or is it common?" Alan asks, speaking of his feelings towards him. He explains, "one needs to trust and develop people, not frustrate and ridicule them ... you only hit me once - he hit me twice". Alan speaks of an occasion when his work for an exhibition was 'pulled down' by him, and of being 'made to feel it' because he does not have a degree. It is difficult for Alan to overcome his influence in his present circumstances.

A further source of frustration to Alan is the uncertainty surrounding the extent and the limitations of his responsibilities. With a direct responsibility to the head of his own department and a nominal responsibility to other heads of departments, Alan asks "to whom am I responsible?" The lack of confirmation and little guidance in how he carries out his work, the difficulty in establishing the criteria for his success, all contribute to the gap between Alan's ideals and the identity he is obliged to assume at present. "I'm primarily an industrialist going to an academic institution where people have never been out into industry or commerce, and I'm used to solid lines in an organisation structure, where you know what you are responsible for ... I would like to know what is expected of me". Alan describes the situation as "people in their little boxes playing around in power politics ... everyone acting as individuals" and regrets the lack of mutual co-operation and interest. Two particular incidents contribute to Alan's perceptions; one was the experience of being asked to plan a project but not being consulted or involved in the implementation. Another was his failure to gain approval from the appropriate committee for his sabbatical visit. Alan describes this as "A tragedy I feel

personally ... a colossal misunderstanding ... The academics don't want to be involved in helping small businesses. How much better it would be if we were integrated". Both incidents contribute to Alan's frustration that he is not being recognised for the skills that he has, and to the difference he perceives between himself as an 'industrialist' and his colleagues and employers as 'academics'.

The Total Picture

Alan admits that the identity he seeks in his work "has got to be a total of my experience" - a total of his experiences past and present. His determination and confidence that he can and will achieve the recognition he seeks has developed through a series of situations and incidents which question his confidence and ability to do so and yet strengthen his resolve. These are the experiences of redundancy, of being pushed out of his role as manager of the centre, of being 'hit twice', of not being consulted, and of not finding his own requests supported. Alan needs to prove his strengths. "Why are they getting in someone from outside" he asks, "when I have the experience to do it", referring to his interest in 'small business' education and consultancy. With little authority to establish changes in his role unilaterally, Alan felt a sense of recognition and achievement at organising a successful Christmas party for the entire department - "but what a way to do it" he says.

Alan says that he has a "basic need to influence what is going on around and to see that justice is being done". He sees part of his determination stemming from his own concern for humanity in general, and his conviction about what is right and wrong. Alan stresses the influence that the church has in giving him a basis for his life, and places his involvement in the church "at the top of the levels of relation" in his life. His sense of social justice enables him to justify his

own ambitions and aims to go to the third world on a sabbatical visit, for example. It is a way of helping others, and a way of fulfilling the 'caring values' that he feels he has. His fulfilment in life has two main dimensions, says Alan - his own 'individuality' and his concern for humanity in general.

In his job, he cannot find either dimension fulfilled in practice without 'recognition' by others, for without 'recognition' in the form of an official role and identity, Alan does not have the authority or the financial backing at work to help others in a way that also preserves his own individuality. Experiencing a negation of his individuality and a rejection of his skills and abilities in redundancy and re-deployment, Alan's need for recognition and confirmation of his abilities is strengthened; according to the extent to which he feels recognised in his day to day activities, his frustration wanes and grows. Alan hopes that his frustration would be resolved were he recognised as "a specialist in education in the general management of small businesses",and were supported in his plans to visit the third world. However impossible this may seem at times, it is the hope that enables him to preserve a sense of his own individuality in an organisation with which he does not identify completely, although dependent upon it in practice. It is an ideal in which to some extent Alan sets himself apart from his organisation - as a specialist in a new field. In setting himself apart, Alan is able to cope with the separations imposed upon him, in the form of disinterest in and rejection of his skills. It is an ideal to which he can relate both his experiences of recognition and rejection - an ideal which is essential to his integration with his work, and to the preservation of a sense of continuity in himself.

APPENDIX 2

SARA'S PROFILE

(An example from the second project, "Life Stories")

SARA

Introduction

At the start, Sara wasn't sure whether she would enjoy the project or would want to complete it. But in the event, Sara takes part to give a very full and clear account of her experiences, in which her awareness of her own characteristics, her openness to her feelings, her understanding of herself are clear and striking. "I'm surprised" says Sara, "because I always feel I can't explain myself very well!" Sara begins with a clear perception of the most important theme in her life, and the experiences and events that have been significant to her. Her development focuses almost exclusively on the theme of relationships, and her story tells of a process of learning and change through the experiences of relationship and interaction with others. Sara also develops a clear understanding of how the project can be helpful to her, as a means of learning what she has tended to do in her relationships in the past, and anticipating what she might do in the future. As her story reveals, Sara is at a critical time of reassessment in her life, where she has the opportunity to make fairly sweeping changes in her lifestyle, to try out new ideas - or to decide whether she wants to make any changes in the future.

Contents:

PART ONE : SARA'S STORY

Key Themes and Change

Sara identifies two clearly distinguished aspects or themes in her life as a whole. One is 'work', and the other her 'well-being', or 'happiness'. For Sara, the two are unrelated.

"I don't think my job affects me myself, work isn't important to me when I'm happy outside work. Work is something different, on the whole it's completely separate, I can cut off my work from how I am outside" says Sara. Work is separate from and subsidiary to the central theme in her life, her emotional well-being. "Happiness is the most important thing" says Sara. Her happiness comes primarily in her relationships with other people. "I can make myself happy to a certain extent but it is more what I share with people, or relationships that I have with people, friends as well. I just feel that in my life people have been more important than anything, and if you've got one person in particular, that's more important. ... I'm happiest when I'm in love with someone" says Sara. When this happens, the relationship becomes the whole of Sara's life. "Once I'm in a relationship, that's it! I don't look outside it for any other excitement" she explains.

In neither her work life, nor in her relationships, has Sara particularly sought to make a lot of changes. "I don't look for a lot, I tend to let things happen. Unless I'm really desperate, I just let things carry on until something happens. I'm not the type to get up and go ... I hate making decisions, I'm much happier with someone else making the decisions" she says. Nevertheless, Sara has changed her job several times. "I suppose I changed each job when I got to a point where it was just boredom really ... I was looking for something more, I wanted something more challenging" she says. She recognises that leaving home was her own decision. "Moving to Bristol was a big thing,

that was purely my own decision, purely because of me". But in the rest of her life, Sara feels that events have been influenced very much by other people. "I don't feel as if I'm in control over that many things that happen to me, I think other people control that more. It's been out of my hands, it hasn't been up to me" she says. In Sara's happiness and well-being, the actions of other people play a central role, and her own learning and change is a process of learning through her interactions with other people.

Sara doesn't mind not feeling in complete control of her life. "I'm happy, it's not that I want control" she says. "I think I thrive on highs and lows, when I'm on a level I'm itchy, I'm dissatisfied. It's either got to be right the way down or really high ... I wouldn't want things to fall neatly into place. I don't expect everything to be perfect, I think it would be pretty boring if it was. I think you've got to let off steam now and again." Sara's is a story of great happiness and great sadness, of emotional experience and change. Sara seeks and finds in her relationships the excitement she needs and enjoys.

Always underlining her happiness and well-being is one particular relationship - Sara's relationship with her parents. "All through my life my mum and dad have been the most important thing. You know they are stable and it's something I can grasp hold of. When things are really wrong I turn to them. I know that whatever went wrong with me, they would be there to fall back on" says Sara. "When people haven't got that kind of relationship with their parents I think how do they manage, how do they survive not really having somebody who cares more about them than they care about themselves?"

The unchanging love of her parents is an important source of stability and support for Sara, and whereas other relationships in her life have changed or come to an end, her parents are always there. Her relation-

ship with her parents has also been a model for other relationships in her life. "I've always known that relationships are the most important thing right back from when I was at home with the family" says Sara. "It's a two way thing - the same with all the relationships I've had, like with my mum and dad, if they see that I am happy then they are automatically happy".

Outline of Experiences and Events

"Chunks of my life revolve around other people" says Sara, identifying the events associated with change in her life. The beginning and ending of relationships, and changes in palces of work and home provide the outline of Sara's story.

"I was born in London in 1952 and my parents moved to Torquay when I was about three. In 1963 I took my eleven plus, and I went to grammar school, and at that time horse-riding was the most important thing to me. And then in 1968 I met Greg. He was the first most important person in my life. I went to college for two years and I started my first job, in '69 or '70 at an antique auctioneers in Torquay. In 1971 I got engaged to Greg, and I changed jobs. I worked for an accountants but I only stood it for about six months ... and Greg and I finished.

"Well after that I met Nick, a friend whose parents lived in Paignton, and he worked in Bristol. I used to come up to Bristol at weekends, and in '72 or '73 I decided to move to Bristol. I had met a girl called Ann when I'd come up at weekends, and I moved into a flat for the first time. I'd been with my mum and dad before that. So I started work in Bristol at a fashion store ... I then changed jobs and worked in the Health Service for a year, and I met Phil who was the next most important person in my life, the most important but the next one after Greg. And I worked in a chain store for six months - and I didn't like that and in July '79 I moved to the tax office, where I still am.

"In September '79 I got married to Phil, and just over a year later in October or November we decided to separate, and I moved into a bedsit on my own in November 1980.

"14th February 1981 was a very important day for me. I met Ron in April just after my 29th birthday. In May Phil left England. In August '81 I moved into this flat with Mary and Claire."

Sara suggests the following stages or phases in her life: "Up to when I started grammar school was one stage. Then when I left grammar school and went to college, that was quite a different type of life, you felt grown and important and you could wear your own clothes. I met Greg in the school holidays before I started college. I enjoyed life at college, it was completely different sitting in a class of boys as well as girls. Then a stage when I started work until I came to Bristol. Then when I came to Bristol up until Phil came along, that was a stage in between. Then the time that I had with Phil up to the time that I moved in here."

In terms of happiness and well-being, Sara's life is punctuated by two periods in which her happiness reaches a peak, followed by a sharp fall, an emotional 'down'. These are the phases formed by the two most important relationships in her life - the first, from her meeting with Greg, peaking with their engagement and then suddenly falling with their finishing a year later, from the age of seventeen to twenty; and the second, from her meeting with Phil, peaking with their marriage and then suddenly falling with their separation a year later, from the age of twenty four to twenty eight. Of the two relationships, Sara's marriage brought both the greatest happiness and the greatest pain. "That was the best time I had, when I was happiest" says Sara, "and when we split up and separated it was just downhill, right down to the bottom, and I couldn't have got any lower".

These two relationships, in which Sara finds fulfilment in the experience of mutual happiness, only to be followed by conflict and separation and periods without "one person in particular", are the core experiences in Sara's story. Through alternating phases of being 'in' a relationship, of being in love, and of being without a relationship, being in the outside world again, Sara's story evolves.

The Story

"When I was at school all I can remember was that I had a happy childhood - nothing stands out in my mind particularly but I was happy. I used to go to school on the back of my dad's pushbike. He had a push-bike with a little chair on the back - he used to teach at the senior school. I can remember my school friends and remember when a schoolboy died of leukaemia. That was a terrible shock, I'd never known anybody before that had died.

"At junior school I was aware that you looked at boys differently. I remember a friend having a crush on a chap and passing little love messages, these little notes across, but it wasn't really important to me.

"When I was about nine I started horse-riding and doing things on my own. Before it was all with my mum and dad, going everywhere with them. It was the first thing I remember doing that was really enjoyable.

"The eleven plus was the first time I panicked about anything, it was just nerves I think. I was walking down to the sea front with my mum and dad. It was a nice day, and I suddenly burst into tears, My mum wondered what was wrong, and I said 'Oh I've got to take my eleven plus' and I went to the doctor and he gave me a sedative ... I remember it ever so well, that day. Exams were never very important to me after that.

"My life changed so much over my teens - it went from horses to men! I never did anything really outrageous at school, it was a grammar school, a girl's grammar school. My childhood and school life was all conventional. Once we went to the swimming baths and went in to get some sweets and were told off by the headmistress. I was terrified about that, because I wasn't a naughty girl, I didn't feel as if I was doing anything anughty. I didn't have many boyfriends then and it was all sort of innocent. In the second or third year this chap used to wait for me at the bottom of the steps, and he asked me out, and we went to the pictures a couple of times. I was naive, I knew how babies came but I thought that was the only reason anything happened, because you wanted to have a baby.

"I took my 'O' levels, and I didn't really study for them, it didn't really bother me.

"Then I met Greg, during the summer holidays when I was sixteen or seventeen, when I left grammar school before I went to college, and that's when things started happening I suppose ... I didn't really look for anything outside my home life when I was sixteen. I was quite a late developer, I was very immature when I was fifteen or sixteen, and I think I just grew up so much in that time. I went out with him for six months before anything happened - he was really nice, he was so gentle but it was terrifying. If you've had quite a sheltered life, when it happens it's really frightening.

"My whole life revolved around him, and it was a lovely time. We were in a nice group and he was in a rowing club. I was a mod at sixteen, I had long hair until I was sixteen and then I had it cut. We used to go down on a Sunday afternoon to the sea front, loads of us, on the back of a scooter. I used to have a really short leather mini skirt ... then flower power, and transfers, I used to have transfers

on my cheeks. Everything I had had bells on from sixteen until I don't know what age, I was always keeping up with the times, but I was never a hippy, I was into flower power but never a real hippy.

"I was happy for a long time then. Greg was accepted by my mum and dad which helped. His parents emigrated to Australia and he was more like a son to them than anything else. My mum and dad used to take him everywhere on holiday, and he stayed with us at Christmas.

"We would have got engaged a year earlier, but my mum and dad told us to wait until my nineteenth birthday. I couldn't imagine anybody else but him. I thought I'd have children by him and that would be it. He was my whole life. I thought you just went out with somebody, went steady with somebody, and your mum and dad approved of them and you got engaged and married, and there were no complications. Greg was the dominant one. I was quite shy and young and he was sort of strong. He used to say to me he was pretty conventional.

"By the time I finished college I was fed up with exams, I did business studies and 'A' level accounts. If you feel happy at the time you don't think 'Oh if something happens then I ought to have something to fall back on'. I thought well I had qualifications, and at the time I was so well qualified in comparison to other people of my age, I just didn't want to go to university.

"When I was at college I worked during the holidays, but the auctioneers was the first job. That was quite exciting to start with, and I used to go out with the valuers sometimes and if people wanted to sell anything in their houses we used to go round to Dartmoor and have a good look around all these lovely houses on Dartmoor. I had to write down notes of all the different things, and when they had sales I had to go down and clerk the sales and add up all the money. It was good but I was only getting paid about nine pounds a week.

"My mum and dad were out looking for houses for us, we were engaged and we were going to get married. We were really close, a bit too close ... I think we just grew apart. We split up because different things had happened. It was a mutual agreement and we talked about it quite sensibly and I realised that he wanted to do a lot more before he settled down and got married - and I accepted it. I think it was Greg more, I accepted what he said, I think I would have let things go on... In the end it was more a question that he wanted a postponement and I thought 'Oh he's stalling with me'. I think if I'd said OK I'll wait ten years - but I'd known him a long time, I was at the stage where I wanted, and everybody else was settling down and getting married, and I just felt I wanted to settle down. I couldn't have thought of ten years living with my mum and dad and seeing him, it was too frustrating to live like that. I'd changed a lot when I was about twenty, and I just wanted a normal husband and wife relationship and I couldn't have waited.

"I was terribly jealous at that age I know, and I suppose that was the potential for why we split up. The rowing club was very important to him and he went away for the weekend on races, and I used to get ever so jealous and terribly uptight about it, at being left on my own. He loves his rowing, and I don't think I could ever have competed against it. I hated to think it was more important than me. It wasn't just that but I used to get moody and sulk because he wouldn't do what I wanted him to do; it probably caused rows at the time. But I think I believed that though we might be having a few ups and downs, things would be OK, it wasn't that important, because next year we'd be settled in a house and married, and I never thought we wouldn't be.

"I was very upset about it but my mum helped me through a lot. I bumped into him one night three or four weeks after that and he was

begging me to go back with him, but I think it was just a spur of the moment thing. Because I'd made the split I made up my mind it was over, I could see his point of view. Perhaps I could have carried on if I hadn't given in so easily. Looking back on it it's difficult to remember what hurt. I never think of him with any bitterness, I always think fondly of him. I'll always be pleased to see him now because he was a really kind person ... but he was very ambitious with his rowing and I don't think he would have given up anything for that, to achieve what he wanted to do. I can accept that it wouldn't have worked.

"At the time I thought it was the end of the world, but when we split up and I moved to Bristol, as soon as I came to Bristol I got over it.

"Although I enjoyed the job at the auctioneers I didn't feel as if they appreciated me. There was a girl who didn't have any qualifications at all and she was put above me ... I could see me stuck there for years. I thought the job in the chartered accountants would be all figure work, and I loved accounts at college. But when I got there it was pretty boring of course and I used to get all the horrible jobs. I didn't think I'd be doing things like making tea and coffee, the office junior. I only had it for six months ... I didn't have much of a social life, and I thought it was time to move from home. I could have stayed at home but I knew things would get worse if I'd stayed at home, and I wasn't being fair to my mum and dad. I couldn't help myself but I was getting more and more irritable with them. If I had stayed I would have got into a real rut.

"I started to write for jobs in London, but everyone put me off and said I'd be lonely. Then I met Nick who lived in Bristol and I used to come up at weekends and got to know a girl up here who was looking for a flat. Nick used to send down the local paper and I saw the job

at the fashion store advertised, and really fancied working for them. It sounded like a real glamour job to me, coming from Torquay! I came up for an interview and they offered it to me when I came up for the day. Nick went into the merchant navy, but it didn't put me off Bristol - I still stayed and enjoyed it.

"It was a big step for me, to leave home. I came to Bristol when I was twenty one, twenty two. It was the first time I'd been away from home. Until then I'd had my family behind me, I'd had someone who was very close. But I was on my own, and it was the first time in my life I didn't have somebody that I could come home to and knew that they cared for me and would look after me. I still had strong ties with my home and then I used to go home a lot to Torquay, nearly every weekend. I did miss my mum and dad to start with.

"Life was so different. The girl I shared a flat with knew a lot of people and we just went round in a group, and my social life jumped up, and we went to parties. And it was a totally different thing to have to do to look after yourself, cook for yourself, do the washing as well. And shopping, I was useless at shopping. I loved my job at the fashion store, and the wages were about four times the amount I was getting in Torquay. I worked hard and I enjoyed it, it was the social life. The buyers used to come down from London and we went to the pub every night straight from work. I used to do everything practically, the sales, petty cash, wages, all the different things.

"But then they moved the office to the outskirts of Bristol, and that's when I started not liking it. I didn't like the travelling for a start, and the work wasn't so exciting because you were away from the public, it was very isolated, and just ordinary team work. So I saw a job advertised with the Health Authority, in the wages department. I went for the interview and I think they took on about four - I found

it quite easy to chop and change then, if I got fed up with a job. I enjoyed doing the wages but it was a big office and it was so impersonal, just seeing people's names and money. It was the same thing more or less, week after week.

"I suppose I was in a rut before I met Phil. I had a couple of years when things got really stagnant. They weren't down, they weren't up, they were just boring. I thought 'How long is this going to go on? Something has got to happen soon'. We were staying in quite a bit, and we had free tickets for a disco one night, and we weren't going to go. At the time we hardly went to discos at all - but after we'd had a bottle of wine, we decided to go down and see what it was like. And that's when I met Phil. It was great, it really was. I was about twenty four then.

"That was the best time I had, when I was happiest. There was something different with him, and he treated me differently. From the day we met there was hardly a day we didn't see each other. He moved into the flat I was sharing, and then we got a place together. We had a good few years together, and I thought things would go on for ever, that I would never see anything bad again. It was a lovely feeling, I used to love going home from work. I couldn't wait for the day to finish, I hadn't felt like that for a long time.

"Apart from the fact that he was a foreigner, a Jordanian, it was a completely different relationship from Greg. When I first met him, he didn't have any confidence at all. He spoke fairly good English but he just didn't have the confidence to carry on a conversation with anybody, and I felt sorry for him straight away, that attracted me, he looked a bit out of it. His friends were full of confidence and I'd get really protective towards him and argue for him. I used to do all the phoning up if there was something to do with the flat or

the car, and a lot of the things that you'd expect a man to do were left to me, which would wear me out sometimes. To outsiders it was me that had to make contact and arrange things. But inside the relationship, I felt dependent on him. I felt as if I were leaning on him, I felt protected by him. Anyone looking in would think it was me being protective, but I was protecting him for not making a fool of himself I suppose. He appreciates that I helped him a lot with different things. He used to do the cooking and do different meals, and we always used to have people coming in and out having tea. We used to play cards until four or five in the morning and sleep till lunchtime on Saturday.

"But my parents didn't accept Phil. They weren't openly rude to him, but it was something they just couldn't accept, because he had different ways. But they knew that he was making me happy, and that was the most important thing, so they let things go on. But Phil wasn't relaxed when we went home, it was a bit of a chore.

"Phil was supposed to be studying over here and he just didn't want to study and he didn't go to college or anything. His father used to phone up and shout at him, and shout at me, blaming me for him not going to college. I could see his dad's point of view now, his dad was sending over money and Phil was wasting his time. Phil decided that he didn't want to study so he didn't go in to college. His father stopped sending money over, so we were hard up. We never had any money to buy any food, and used to ransack the kitchen for anything, for any tins of peas, for anything we could make differ out of. It was bread at the end of the month. But money had never been important. It didn't bother me, as long as Phil was happy, I'd have gone out working for him as long as we had enough money to get through the month.

"I changed jobs I think because I was looking for something more, I wanted something more challenging. I worked in a chain store for

six months, which was awful. I had to stay in late and work alternate Saturdays. I hated that. I was in the cash office and had to wait until all the money was brought up in the tills before I could lock up the safe, so I was always the last one to leave. It was an awful office, a pokey little place with just a little skylight, with iron bars, it was just like being in a cell at the time. At the time I suppose I didn't keep up with most of my friends. There was a couple we used to go out with sometimes, a friend I used to work with. I got to know a lot of Phil's friends, they were really nice and I got on with them well. Then I applied to the Civil Service, and I went for an interview and there was a vacancy in the tax office, that was in July '79.

"We married in September '79. I was so happy, and if anybody had told me on our wedding day that it wasn't going to last...!

"We were living anyway as a married couple and I thought well, marriage isn't going to make any difference. It didn't make an awful difference to Phil because it was an English wedding, and if we'd been married in a mosque I suppose it would have meant more to him. We were married in the registry office, and my mum and dad came - but she said since we split up, that my dad had started to say he wasn't going to come up - but I don't know whether she's just said that since.

"I wanted children, and I wanted Phil's children. I wasn't in love with the idea of having kids running around, I had this urge to have his children.

"Phil was trying to look for a job most of the year, and he couldn't get anything. He tried for a couple of jobs and they didn't want to know, one didn't even see him, he said because of his name. He had this thing, 'Oh all English people are prejudiced', and I think before he started he was convinced he wouldn't get anything. One chap had a caseful of applications and still couldn't get anything. So he gave

up trying in the end. He wasn't doing a lot, but because we were happy together that seemed the only important thing, that we had each other and we'd get through it. It didn't bother me he wasn't doing a lot, and I stuck by him through ever such a lot. But it was demoralising for him, if you haven't got anything to do all day and he didn't like the idea that he was taking money off me and living off what I was earning.

"I used to get up in the mornings and leave him, and then he wouldn't get up until midday and didn't want to sleep at night. And there was nothing I could do, I tried so hard, and there was nothing I could do or say to make him feel better. And when he went down, he was bringing me down. I knew he wasn't able to help me, because he was so down himself. He knows how I supported him, not just financially, I was behind him all the way. But it just got to the stage where he wasn't what I married, he wasn't the person I knew. I couldn't take it, I wanted, I kept praying it would go back to how it was before. But he was so low, it was just like banging my head against a brick wall, because there was nothing I could do for him.

"It was in August, just before our wedding anniversary that I knew there was something wrong. Things just altered, and it went on until November. I just didn't see him, he started disappearing, and he used to come home after I'd gone to bed. I used to lie awake hoping he'd come in, and look out of the window, and think what's the point, he probably won't be back until six o'clock in the morning. I used to beg him to tell me if he was having an affair, and he was so convincing he swore that he wasn't, and used to say so even when I didn't beg him to tell me. I believed him, but I knew there had to be something important.

"He said he was seeing his friends, and I hated the thought that he was turning to someone else. I suppose I made matters worse because

when I saw him I was so desperate to get through it and find a solution. I needed to talk to him, but all I could do when I did see him was nag, I was so uptight about it, there was nothing I could say or do. I'd leave a bottle of aspirins spread over the floor so I could shock him into realising what was happening, but I think he thought I was play acting. When I did see him I couldn't talk to him I was so hysterical, and used to drink myself silly. I was suicidal, I just couldn't take any more. I said he would have to leave or something would have to happen, or I would just screw up. And one night we had a talk about it, I said 'Even if it's just weekends I want some sort of relationship, or else you'll have to leave because I can't stand it.' I didn't want to do it, but I had to, it was making me ill.

"He said, 'OK I'll go', and I cried all night but it was a relief, because I thought I know he's not coming back, I can live with that. But the next day he came back again, and I went berserk. I knew then he couldn't see how down I was, and I was desperate for him to see that.

"The worst time was when he was still living there but wasn't and I couldn't sleep because I was expecting him to come home. It was a lovely flat but I couldn't wait to get out because I was sleeping in the same bed, which was terrible. I moved into a bedsit, and I had to put on more show, because there was a girl in the other one there and you can't go around crying when someone else is there, I had a bit of pride left and I wasn't going to let myself go.

"How I got up some mornings during that time I don't know, I took a few days off from work, but at least it was something to go to, it kept me going. I had a fantastic section leader, and when I confided in her she was so good with me.

"We'd been together so long I'd lost a lot of my friends and there was nobody I could talk to about it, and I turned to my mum and dad

when things went wrong and told them a bit too much maybe, but I just had to talk to somebody. When I found out afterwards that Phil had an affair with somebody, my parents were there when this all came out, on Valentines Day, and we went round to see him. It was terrible. Before I couldn't forgive him for how he'd got me, but I'd had time from November to February to get over it, and then it all came back again. Whereas before I couldn't say I hated him, then I hated him. I think it was the lie, that he'd lied and I'd believed him. I went back to the bedsit, and I remember I had my married name on the door and I just took it out and ripped it up.

"My mum's so bitter about it, and my mum and dad just hate all foreigners because of him. They blame him completely, they go on about it and it's happened now, it hurt but I don't feel bitter towards Phil now. He went back to his own country last May, and it's silly because I trust him now, even though I believed his lies, I believe in him again. He told me, don't get involved with a foreigner again, it's not a good idea, maybe one percent it works for. Now we get on well together, only on the phone and with letters. I forgive but I don't forget.

"When we split up and separated it was just downhill, right down to the bottom and I couldn't have got any lower and I thought it was about time I did something. The landlord was selling the bedsit - I was there for about eight months. And this place was advertised and then I think when I moved in here and had people around me, it was a lot easier to get myself out of it. I had to go to the hospital for about six weeks for a skin rash, I've still got it now - at least it's better than your hair falling out, which happens to some people who have had a traumatic experience!

"I started going out again last April, and met someone but it wasn't anything important. It was nice at the time, I felt quite flattered

that I could, but I was terrified, it was such a long time since I'd had a date with anyone. I thought 'What do you say to a bloke, what do they wear nowadays?' It really was an effort, the first time or so I'd come home so miserable, I'd think I'd rather stay in. I just felt there was something missing, I felt like a girl on my own, I used to feel incomplete. And to have to go up to the bar and ask for a drink!

"I don't think about the future too much now. I never got to the stage where I could even start trusting anybody else. I'm a bit cynical, I think I'll protect myself now, I've put my guard up so that no-one gets through to me. I've had a few odd relationships, but I think why is everyone so peculiar and complicated? I can't get that interested in them. Now the chance of coming across a thirty five year old, forty year old single man with no commitments and who isn't queer or something isn't very likely. It's a relief to know I've gone through the worst part of my life, I'm convinced I'll never feel like that again, it can only go up. I wouldn't ever let myself get like that again, through what I've learnt, the experiences I've had. Now I have odd days when I get a bit fed up, but I wouldn't say I get really depressed about it. I don't feel in a rut because it is new to me still. I've got back into being a human being again. I kid myself on sometimes that I'm happy on my own, but I tend to punish myself, in general I like being with somebody, I prefer men's company to women's, I don't know why. But I know, where I am now, how much pleasure I can get from just leading a single life and I hope that I remember that if I go into a long relationship, to realise how much pleasure you can get from not being with somebody, so that I can keep some of my independence. Because of what's happened, I feel a lot more independent now, more than when I first came to Bristol because I used to go home a lot then.

"I think whatever is going to happen will happen. I don't want

to move from Bristol, because it's near enough to my mum and dad, and I like the people here. At work I do a bit more now, I collect tax and next week I've got to go out on call, I feel as if I'd like to get out of the office. I'm doing evening calls now, it's my own choice, and it's the only way you can get overtime. Before when I walked out of the office, that was it! I suppose I feel a bit more important at work now than I did six months ago, but I think I'm given more than other people just because of the time I've been there. It might have helped with promotion before, but they are cutting back so much now. I'm sure I will be looking for a change, but at the moment I'm not too bothered. Maybe it will go down far enough and I'll decide what to do. But I expect I'll wait and see what else happens first.

"I always think now that however down you are, you can only go up. Once you do go down rock bottom, you can't go any further, and things are bound to pick up unless you kill yourself - there's no alternative is there? I know I make the same mistakes that I have made, like putting your all into it, not having any interests outside the relationship. But whether I'll do the same again, I don't know until it happens! ... I hope I don't!"

PART TWO : PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT

Sara's is a moving story, telling how she now finds herself recovering from a time of great upheaval and change, and adjusting to a new lifestyle and a new identity. It's as if Sara is at the start of a new era and at the end of another - in which, after first her engagement to Greg and then her marriage to Phil, Sara sought to fulfil a dream of happiness in a lifelong two-person relationship, with the promise of children and a role as wife and mum. "When I finished college I just thought I want to be a wife and mum, I didn't want any fantastic

job" says Sara. Sara did find happiness but it was not to last.

"I think now I accept my life is different from how I thought it would be when I was seventeen, eighteen ... I've just given up the thought of having something really conventional, the conventional stability with the house and children ... I've never had a normal relationship and I don't want it ... I don't think I'm going to meet a conventional man, but it would be boring if they were all eligible and single, I've got past that now. ... I'd think a lot more about having children now - I'm too old and I haven't got the patience for them" says Sara.

With the time now to sit back and reflect on what has happened, Sara realises that she has learnt a great deal since her teens. "When I was a teenager I thought you just went out with somebody, went steady, and your mum and dad approved of them and you got engaged and married and there were no complications, and nobody else involved. I didn't realise men went off with other women, but thought that it happened to other people and not to me". She also wishes that she had thought more about a career then, realising that she had an aptitude for accountancy. "I regret not having done accountancy. I wouldn't go back to studying now but I think I should have done more. If I'd gone on and taken more qualifications I know now I'd be better off ... Because I've decided I'm not going to have kids, I'll be working I suppose and I hate to think that for the next ten years I'll still be in the tax office - that petrifies me" says Sara.

Most importantly perhaps in terms of the learning she has achieved about herself, Sara realises that in spite of becoming a little more involved in her job now, her need and hope for a stable and serious relationship continues. "I do want a long term relationship" she says, "I kid myself sometimes that I'm happy on my own, but in general I like

being with somebody. For a long time I suppose I've enjoyed men's company more than women's on the whole". In spite of past disappointment and disillusionment, Sara expresses no bitterness or blame. "I forgive but I don't forget" she says, ... "I think you've got to accept people for what they are, and you can't judge everybody by past experience" she says. Realising too that the chances of finding someone suitable are not as great as in her teens, Sara begins to modify her ideas about the kind of relationship she seeks. "It excites me in a way I suppose ... Because I don't think I'm going to meet anyone conventional". On the whole Sara finds it easier not to think too much about what will or might happen. "I don't think too much about the future. I think I just live day by day. There's nothing I'm going to plan, I just believe something will happen" she says, and jokes, "I expect I'll be married to a bloke with a hundred kids and unemployed".

Rather than make elaborate plans or go out of her way to find somebody, Sara prefers to take life as it comes, but still keeping alive her hope for a long term relationship. Within this context, Sara takes a positive attitude towards both her past and her future. She sees her development both in terms of what she has acheived in herself, through her experiences; and in terms of what she has yet to achieve in herself, how she herself might try to change for the better in any relationships in the future. This is the light in which Sara takes part in the project. "Doing this makes me realise not where I've gone wrong especially, but what I do and probably will do in the future".

Themes of Development

There are two interlinked and key themes of development in Sara's story, stemming from her perceptions of how she has changed, what she had achieved in herself, and what she has yet to achieve. Both are related to the one word, 'independence'. One is the theme of the growth

of her independence from her home and her parents; one the theme of independence in her personal relationships.

In terms of the former, Sara now realises that she has achieved some independence from her parents, though still needing their love and support. But through leaving home, through marriage to someone they now cannot accept, through establishing a life and a lifestyle now which is very different from their own, Sara feels less dependent upon them and less need to go home so often. It is an independence not only at a practical and physical level, but an independence of their own model of a stable and conventional two-person relationship. Sara's story tells how from first anticipating a life very much like their own in her relationship and engagement to Greg, she now accepts that her life and own relationships will be very different from theirs.

In her relationships with men, Sara hopes that in the future she will remember how much pleasure she can find in "not being with somebody", in retaining other interests outside the relationship. Again this is a practical and a psychological independence, doing things which are not shared by her partner, and finding happiness in things other than the relationship, not relying so heavily upon the relationship for her well-being. This is an independence which Sara feels she has yet to achieve in practice, something that she can only test out in a new relationship, and her learning is at the stage of awareness before experimentation.

Reaching this awareness has been a process of learning the hard way, of experiencing full dependence and the pain that followed. In achieving a greater independence of her parents, the process has been more a gradual progression away from dependence, but the two are inextricably combined. How does this happen?

Key Characteristics

The resources of development, the key characteristics that Sara now recognises in herself and around which her perceptions of her learning revolve, are identified as follows:

1. "All through my life my mum and dad have been the most important thing ... they are stable, something I can grasp hold of".
   The need for stability, for permanence, for reassurance of love for her, is an important and vital aspect of Sara's well-being, which she has found and continues to find in her relationship with her parents, and also seeks in her personal relationships with men.
2. "I can make myself happy to a certain extent but it's more what I share with other people, or relationships that I have ... it's a two-way thing, like Greg made me happy and I made him happy."
   Happiness is in the main something shared, and is for Sara a mutual process and interaction, each person's happiness giving happiness to the other.
3. "As long as they are happy I'm content with what I've got ... I get dependent upon them for the pleasure I can get out of it."
   Sara recognises that finding happiness in another's happiness can become dependence.
4. "Once I'm in a relationship I don't look outside for any other excitement ... I never go to parties, I'm quite content to sit at home ... I enjoy doing things like swimming and horse-riding but if I'm in a relationship I tend to drop things if that person isn't particularly sporty ... I enjoy loving somebody and giving them all."
   Sara so enjoys being in a relationship and loving somebody that she voluntarily cuts off all her other interests, so increasing

her dependence upon the relationship.

5. "I hate making decisions, I'm much happier with someone else making the decision".

   Another thing which contributes to Sara's involvement and dependence in a relationship is her preference to let things carry on as they are or for someone else to make the decisive move.

6. "I don't say I'm happier when someone loves me" says Sara, but the need to receive love as well as to give it, plays an important part in the whole process of development in Sara's life - in the experience of the conflicts in her relationships which lead to decision and change.

7. "I was a sulky child ... I suppose if I didn't get my own way ... I think at the time I always feel as if I've got the right to be rude or sulk because there's something I should be allowed to do or allowed to have".

   In contrast to the happy or sunny side of her character, Sara identifies a moody side which she experiences when frustrated in her wants. Sara has a will of her own and needs which cannot be fulfilled merely by giving to another in a relationship, by letting the other person make all the choices, again a potential source of conflict in her relationships.

General Pattern of Development

The general pattern through which Sara realises these aspects of her character - and, through their interaction, the achievement of independence from her home and a need for the development of independence in her relationships - is a pattern based upon the course of the two important relationships in her life with men. In each happiness and fulfilment is followed by increasing frustration, conflict and finally the breaking of the relationship.

In each, realising fulfilment in the experience of mutual love and happiness, Sara puts her all into the relationship, building her life within it and around it, becoming dependent upon it and upon the happiness of her partner for her own well-being. But then Sara experiences frustration when she finds that, as in Greg's case, his happiness does not fulfil all her needs, and vice versa, and that as in Phil's case, she cannot finally bring him happiness nor he her. In each relationship Sara finds herself caught in a conflict which cannot be resolved while hopes of mutual happiness, through mutual need and dependence, are upheld - for this only increases Sara's dependence and her frustration. In each, rather than continue in a situation with the recognition that their needs are not mutual, and attempting to resolve teh conflict by developing her own independence within the relationship, Sara finds it easier to break her dependence by ending or agreeing to the end of the relationship. With each decision Sara asserts her own will and reaffirms her independence (Figure 42).

This is a pattern repeated twice, and in the second relationship, in her marraige, the circle of dependence becomes tighter. "I would have loved Phil to have an outside interest" says Sara now, recognising his equal dependence upon her in the early days. With greater dependence, the greater Sara's hopes and expectations, and the greater her unhappiness and pain in finding her trust and hopes betrayed. But the repeated experience of becomg dependent upon her partner brings with it, ironically perhaps, the progressive achievement of independence in the other dimension of her development, her relationship with her home and family.

Each personal relationship takes Sara through a process of distancing from, closeness to and then finally a physical move away from her parents and their life-style. Each relationship brings Sara a conflict

Figure 42 Sara: The general pattern of development in relationships

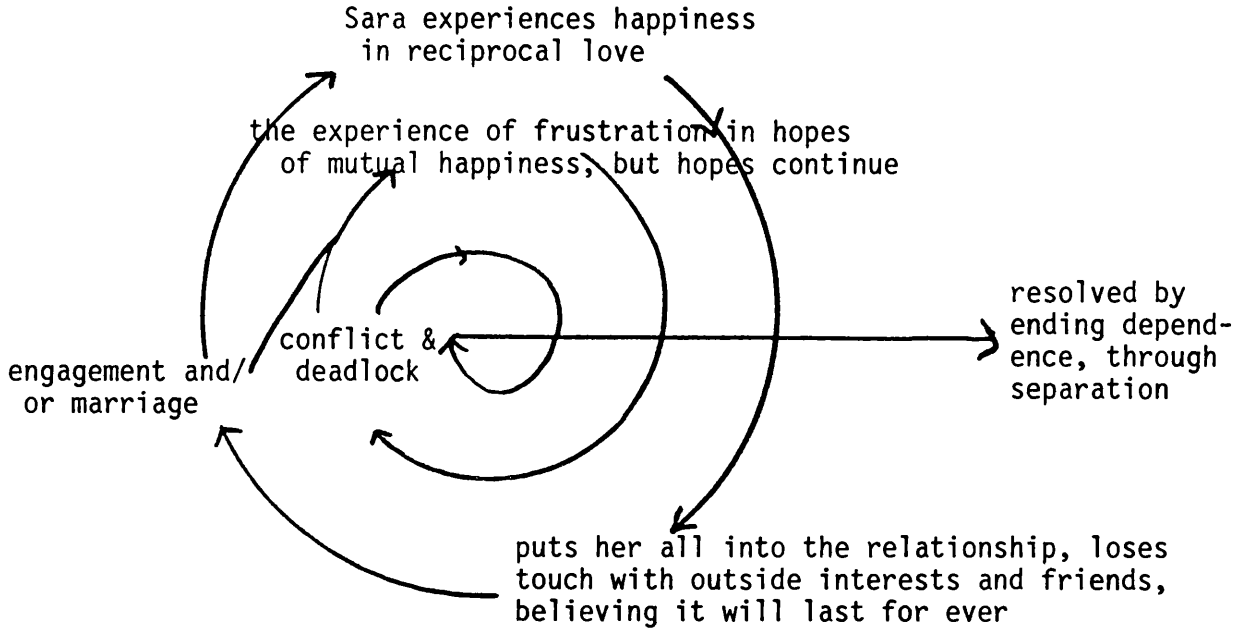
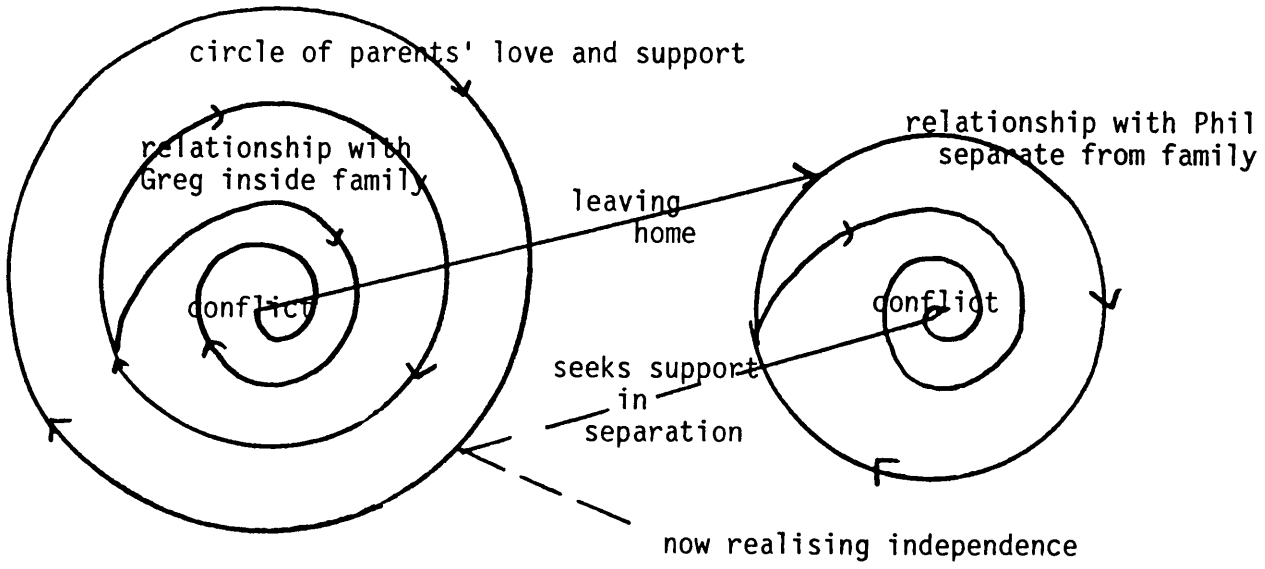


Figure 43 Sara: The pattern in relation to parents and home

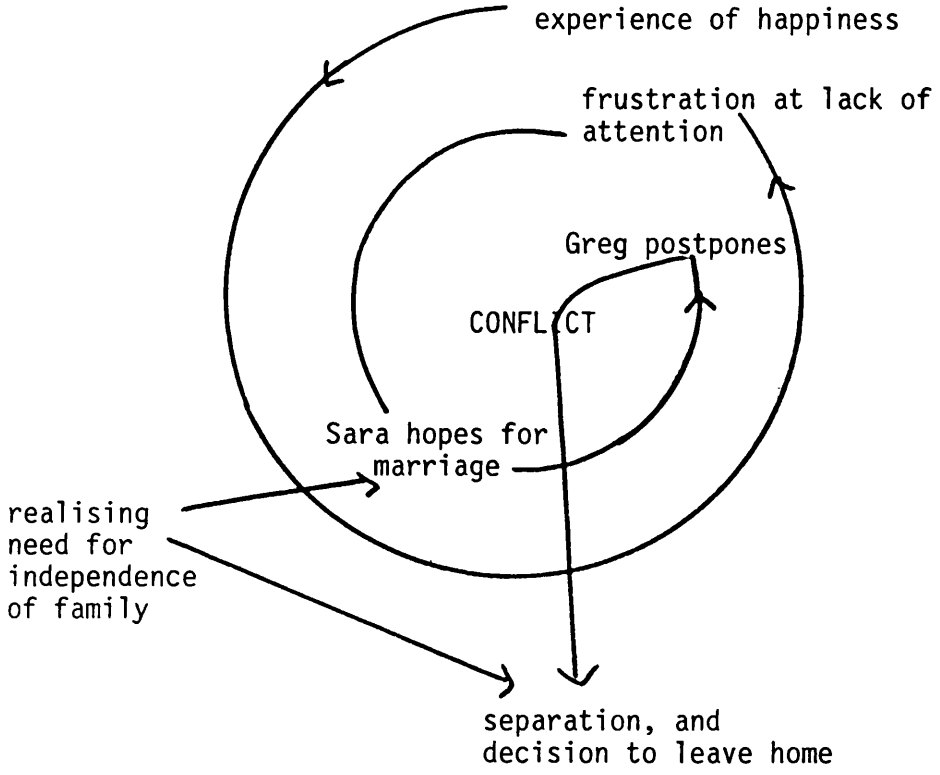


in her relationship with her parents - in the first, because Greg was too much a part of the family and Sara wanted their relationship to be separate. "We were too close" she says; and in the second because Phil was not really accepted by them. This creates a distancing which is overcome as Sara turns to her parents for support upon the break-up of the relationship, and her closeness to them is reaffirmed. But with recovery, and with the reassurance of their love and support, Sara reasserts her independence by first moving away from home; and now, after her marriage, not going home so often. Sara's relationship with Greg developed inside the bounds of her home and family; her move to Bristol enables Sara to build a marriage which is totally separate from her home; and now with separating from her husband, Sara begins to establish a life which is more completely her own, while still maintaining her love for her family. Now Sara is finding a new sense of identity which does not rely upon her parents' love or upon being in love; and in the experience of which she becomes aware of a new sense of independence in herself, and aware of her dependence in the past (Figure 43).

Sub-Patterns of Development

Within each relationship, and through each relationship, Sara experiences a different kind of conflict; and although the overall pattern is similar, Sara learns and becomes aware of something different in each. In each the relationship is different, and Sara points out the differences between Greg and Phil - Greg conventional, with a steady job, her first real boyfriend, kind and gentle, the dominant partner in the relationship, with a passionate interest in rowing; and Phil, from a different culture and country, dependent upon Sara as well as she upon him, unsure of his future, his career. With each different kind of relationship comes a different kind of conflict.

Figure 44: Sara and Greg: the pattern of conflict and change



Sara and Greg (Figure 44)

As well as first experiencing happiness in being in love, Sara finds out the limits of this happiness, the limits of her capacity to give love without also receiving, having or doing what she wants and expects. Now says Sara "I was very selfish with Greg ... I don't think I gave as much as he did ... looking back now I don't think any man is ready to settle down at twenty". But Sara is sure that the relationship couldn't have worked. "Looking back now I can see it wouldn't have worked if we had carried on, because of the kind of person he is ... he is very ambitious with his rowing, and I don't think he would have given up anything for that". Sara learns that she needs to be needed, needs to be as important to her partner as he to her - something she could not change in her relationship with Greg.

Conflict began with Sara's frustration. "It was sheer frustration, there was nothing I could do about it. I was jealous I wasn't being shown the attention I wanted ... I used to get really uptight at being left on my own". The frustration was heightened by Sara's growing need for the relationship to be separate from her family life, for them to be married, and she thought that their difficulties would be over once they were married.

But when Sara realised that Greg could not change, and wanted to postpone their wedding rather than give up his rowing, they reached a deadlock. With all hopes pinned on marriage, Sara could not bear the thought of continuing in the inherent conflict of their present situation, and chose to end the relationship.

Sara adds on further reflection, "It's difficult to put into words exactly what feelings were involved when I decided to make the break with both my important relationships. They were very different in each case. With Greg it was more a gradual thing. We both grew up; matured

a lot during the time we were going out together. It's easy to look back and know that it wouldn't have worked, because I'm not involved with him emotionally now. He is married now and I know that he is unfaithful to his wife, for one thing. So I can say now 'Thank God I'm not his wife'. But what I know now, I didn't at the time. Jealousy was a major reason for us splitting up; jealousy on my part, but I've grown out of that now, though not completely, I never will. But I'm more logical now, then I used to get jealous for no real reason. So, through being jealous, I made myself unhappy. My own feelings made me more unhappy than his actions. I guess I got to the stage when I thought (and it was difficult to admit it) that I must be happier if I was on my own. Because I couldn't control my feelings of jealousy, and I couldn't foresee them improving, only becoming worse, making me more miserable. I was jealous of every little thing. I know now that it was unnatural and stupid to be so immensely jealous, but I couldn't help myself, only by agreeing to end the relationship."

In spite of their love for each other, neither Sara nor Greg were able to accept each other's expectations completely, or to adapt their own expectations enough for the relationship to survive.

Then, through this conflict and their separation, Sara realises another need - for her to leave home, to establish her own home independent of her parents - and she decides to move to Bristol.

Sara and Phil (Figure 45)

In her relationship with Phil, Sara finds someone who does need her as much as she needs him, and comes to experience the most complete fulfilment of her ideal of happiness, achieving her dream of marriage. Through fulfilment, dependence and then the complete overturning of all that she believes and trusts in, Sara finds out the extremes of her emotions and comes to understand that love isn't something simple,

that it can bring with it pain and bitterness. "I realise now that people hurt people they care for" she says.

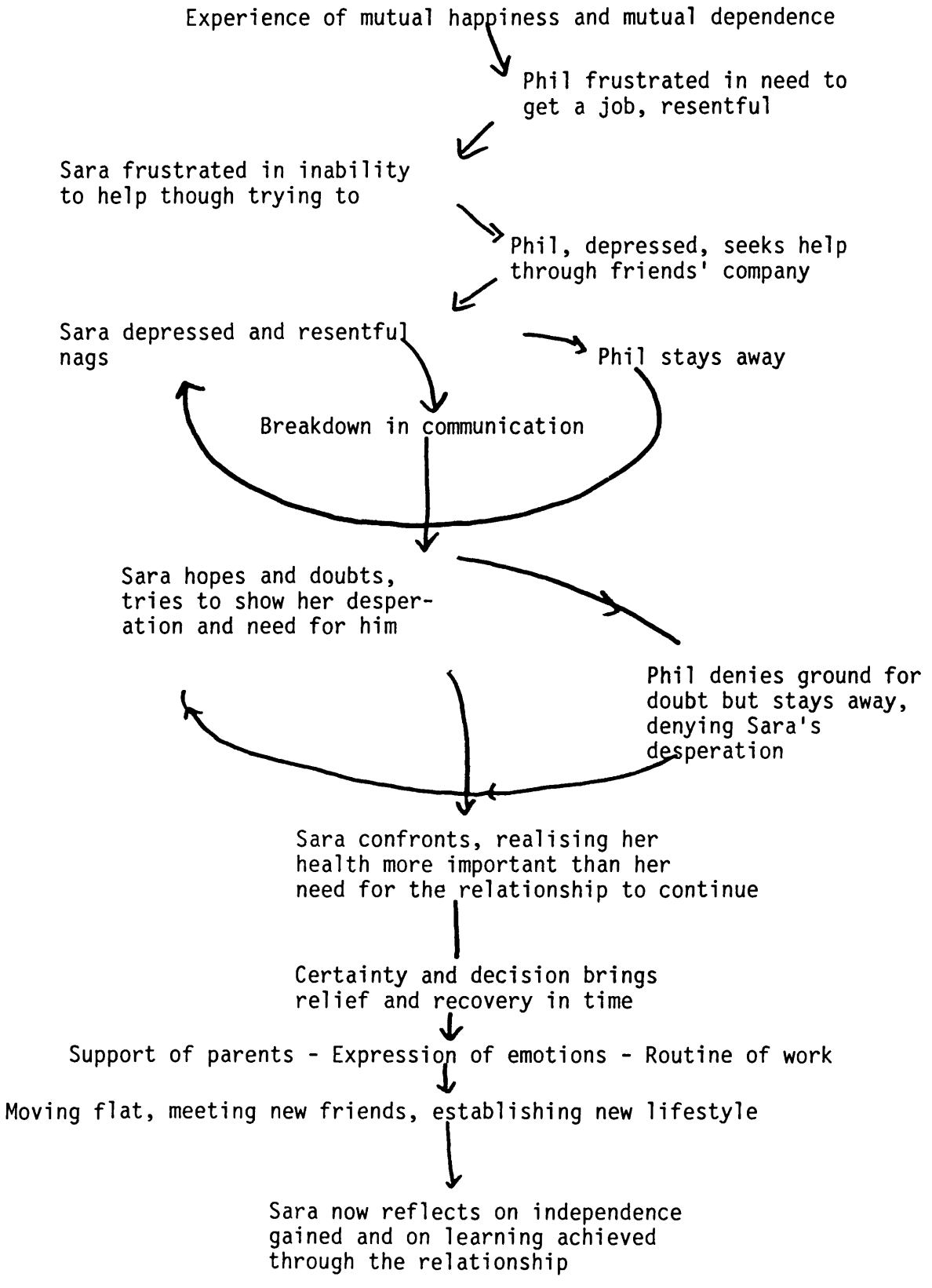
Now, having gone through all of these experiences and extremes, Sara learns of her own strength, and in recognising what she sees as 'faults' in herself, realises how she can try to change in the future to avoid the situation happening again.

"I would never let myself get like that again ... Just not having any interests outside the relationship is a big mistake ... I think I've got a fault in that I put everything into one relationship and in the past I've lost friends, I've lost touch with them, and that is something I hope I'll never do in the future ... I suppose it's a fault of mine that I'm too loving too soon". In a relationship in particular with a foreigner, Sara says "I know it wouldn't work out ... I wouldn't let myself build up to that extent to know that eventually it would have to come to an end. I was happy because he was different to anything that I'd known before, but it's no good if you are going to be really happy and then ..."

As in her relationship with Greg, conflict follows happiness - but this time the conflict develops into mutual unhappiness and resentment, difficulty in communicating to each other, and finally crisis and near breakdown for Sara. How does this happen? and how does Sara recover?

The relationship was founded on a basis of mutual dependence, and any learning that Sara might have achieved in her first relationship about retaining separate interests could not easily be put into practice. Sara found happiness in helping, in giving practical and emotional support to Phil as he found his feet in a foreign country, and in turn leant on him. Although he was not happy in his studies, Sara thought that the happiness in their relationship would be enough to sustain him.

Figure 45: Sara and Phil: The pattern of conflict and change



Problems first arose in earnest when Phil was unable to find a job, which was important to him. Sara felt helpless - the only help she could offer, to support him with her earnings, was unacceptable to Phil and he resented having to live on Sara's earnings. As Phil became more resentful and depressed, so too did Sara, neither able to help each other. By now married, Sara's hopes for children were high, and when Phil turned to his friends for support, Sara too became more and more unhappy. Communciation between them began to break down, and the more Sara nagged the more Phil stayed away, becoming a silent figure in Sara's story. This brought a new conflict for Sara as she began to doubt his love and faithfulness to her, but still needing him and wanting to believe in him, accepted his word, and tried to show him how much she needed him. But the more Sara tried to show her unhappiness, the more she felt that Phil thought she was play-acting. Sara became desperate, and the conflict between believing in their relationship and what was actually happening became unbearable.

Unhappiness, mutual frustration and resentment, had turned into a vicious circle of doubt and hope for Sara, where the more she tried to communicate her feelings to Phil, the more he denied their basis, but in his denial and in his contradictory actions only increased Sara's doubt, her need for him and for him to understand. While Sara still needed him and he continued to stay away but returned to give Sara hope, the vicious circle could not be broken. The worst time says Sara was during the last month or so before their decision to separate.

Sara describes in more detail the feelings which led her to this decision: "With Phil I didn't have such uncontrollable feelings of jealousy. I'm sure that was partly because I was more mature, and I had also learnt through my mistakes with Greg. I loved Phil in a different way. It was a much deeper, much more understanding love. I trusted

him so much, I never had that awful feeling of jealousy. We didn't have to explain ourselves, there didn't seem to be a need for lots of words, because we could feel what we had together. When you are in love, and everything is right, just to say, 'I love you' is enough. And when you know it's true, you know that it also means 'I don't need anyone else but you, I want to make you happy; you are my whole world'. So I knew straight away when things weren't as they should be. He didn't have to explain, I just knew by the way he said and did things, and by what he didn't say and do, that something was very wrong. I didn't know at that time what it was but that wasn't so important as the fact that something was wrong, and I needed so badly for us to have the same understanding between us that we had before. I didn't know then that he was having an affair before we split up. He admitted that he had been unfaithful after we separated, but he didn't tell me how long the affair had been going on. But I know now exactly which night he first slept with someone else. He had tried to be normal, but I knew something was different. At the time, I never imagined what had happened.

"We had been through so many bad times, like the time he had a letter from the Home Office telling him to leave England within 14 days as he wasn't a bona-fide student. Another time when he was arrested at Heathrow Airport and spent hours in a police cell. I remember how sick I felt that night - I was shaking all over. It was like a nightmare - I was so frightened of what might happen to him. And all the times we were literally on the bread line. But the more problems and bad times we pulled through the closer we became. So, I couldn't cope with the knowledge that he stopped turning to me, stopped letting me help him through his bad times, his problems (which had always been equally mine before). I wanted him to need me as well as love me. And that need and love wasn't there any more. My feelings were confused,

maybe they became numbed. It was more my state of mind that forced me to finish what was left of our relationship. I had tried everything I could to hold on to what we had. But, mentally, I couldn't take any more, because I loved him so much. Physically, I was a wreck. I never thought I could feel so low, so desperate, so completely and utterly drained, and there was no other solution but to say 'enough is enough'."

Sara realised that only she could break the circle, by asking Phil to either leave completely or to resume their relationship. It was a difficult decision for Sara to make, "It's something I didn't want to do, but I was just making myself ill - I tried to fight against it, but I couldn't" she says. Still holding out hope, Sara is prepared to compromise in her expectations to the extent of seeing him at week-ends, but Phil chooses to leave. With decision and action, in confront-ation, now knowing that there is no hope, Sara feels relief in being set free from conflict and from the contradictions she had experienced in her beliefs. With the certainty that their relationship is over, the process of recovery begins - but not without the experience and expression of her bitterness and hate when she discovers that Phil had been lying to her.

With the support of her parents and family, by having a job to have to get up and go to, by moving from their flat to somewhere where she had to make an effort to be cheerful, to maintain her pride in the company of others, and by moving flat again to share with Mary and Claire, by starting to go out again in the evenings, Sara "became a human being again", as she puts it.

There are two sides of recovery - one the recovery from and accept-ance of what has happened in their relationship; and the other, the recovery of a life for herself and a new identity. In the light of the trauma that accompanied their separation, Sara's recovery from the

first is amazingly quick. But says Sara "You can't stay like that for ever", and having expressed her anger and bitterness she can now stand back and accept that marriage to someone from a different culture is not easy, and accept their differences, and that separation was inevitable. Nor does Sara feel any guilt or self-reproach. "Phil knows I stood by him all the way" she says, but can also look positively at how she might try to change her own behaviour in the future so that the situation doesn't occur again.

In the second aspect, Sara is still finding her way, and there are a lot of questions still to be answered - what kind of relationship Sara will settle for, how much trust she will have, how much Sara will put into the relationship, whether she will try to maintain some independence within it as she hopes. "It's knowing how much to give" says Sara. But it is also knowing how much to expect - both what kind of a relationship she can expect, and how much she can expect within it. The continuing theme of Sara's learning is finding a balance between her own natural needs and wants to give love, and her expectations in giving it, to also receive love and attention, and to make her partner happy.

Some Conclusions

"Knowing how much to give" remains the question which Sara sees as central to her own development, the source of past conflict and the focus of her learning - the key object for future change, in the light of past experiences. Through 'giving her all' in her relationships, Sara has learnt of the dangers of becoming dependent upon her partner, of the vicious circles of jealousy and resentment, and of the emotional vulnerability this can bring with it. Now, through realising that she can find happiness too in an independent life, in realising that she can be independent, Sara resolves to try to integrate this part of her

identity into any future relationships, moderating her tendency to become dependent. Integrating and finding a balance between her independent identity as a single person, and her dependent identity when in a relationship, remains a continuing task in her life, underlying the pattern of development.

In order to achieve this, Sara looks to her own behaviour rather than her expectations of her partner. The question for her, is how much she might change what she does in a relationship, rather than what she hopes for in giving her love. Sara's hopes for a long term relationship have not changed, nor her ideal of happiness as a mutual interaction, requiring reciprocal love and involvement. Although now Sara recognises that outside interests are important, she accepts that marriage to Greg could not have worked because of his involvement in his rowing, and recognises her need to be important to him, and to receive a certain level of attention in order for the relationship to work. These are expectations which Sara has been unable to change, and she chooses to try to resolve future conflict by moderating what she puts into the relationship, rather than continuing to give her all.

The exact question of how much Sara really wants and needs to change is still uncertain, and Sara is unsure whether she will try to retain some independence or not, once involved again in a relationship. Sara recognises the happiness she does find in giving her all, and having experienced extreme happiness and fulfilment, has no reason to believe that her hopes are totally unrealistic. Sara does modify her expectations to the extent of accepting now that her childhood dreams of a conventional marriage and family are unrealistic given present circumstances, but still, even accepting the realities of the present, Sara retains her hopes, her beliefs, her wish to trust and be trusted.

Sara's story illustrates perhaps how subtle a balance is required

between hope and present reality, between self-acceptance and acceptance of a need for change, between self-acceptance and an acceptance of others and their needs and expectations. A striking and vital element in Sara's story is her resilience. "I'm happy as I am" she says. Her pride and belief in herself, her optimism that things can only get better, her belief that things will always work out for the best, her basic sense of security and ability to love and trust, all help Sara through crisis and give continuing hope for the future. And yet without an awareness of the needs and expectations of others, without recognition that things can go wrong, without acceptance of a need to adapt and change to integrate hope with reality, these same strengths can help to prolong conflict or crisis, to bring a repetition of it. Now Sara has awareness of a need for change, and also still retains her hope and optimism. Perhaps a vital and central element of this integration, a characteristic which Sara herself does not mention but which her story clearly reveals, is her openness to her feelings, her acceptance of and owning of her experiences. With openness and acceptance can come change with pride.

Postscript

By the time of the end of the project, Sara is contemplating further changes in her life. She emphasises the fact that she is beginning to enjoy her own company, and the fact that she needs to confide less in her parents. Sara describes her most recent decision, to buy her own flat. "Due to recent changes in the flat, I became less happy with my home life. I considered my reasons for moving from other flats I have lived in and was aware that it was not usually my own wish to move, rather I was forced to leave through actions by other people, e.g. prior to living here, the bedsit I rented was sold and I was given notice to quit. I felt that it was time for me to change that feeling of not

really having a home of my own. I felt that if I continued to rent accommodation I would again be forced to move. Maybe, I have always thought that I would eventually meet someone else with whom I would set up home. I now realise that I am 30 years old and feel the need for some security of my own, which cannot be taken away or changed by the influence of other people. So I have now decided to buy a flat of my own. If I have not got the security of a lasting relationship, I at least will have the security of a real home. Before, my only constant security has been my parents, which I appreciate and realise the value of very much. Now, with security of a home, I will have more appreciation of a secure job, as I realise without this, buying my own flat will be an impossibility. I have never before felt so excited and anxious for something, other than being in a relationship."

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